

Strangers Who Visit

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Strangers Who Visit

by [TigerPrawn](#)

Summary

The Winter Formal is approaching - Nigel and Adam have been together 2 months and they are taking things slow but Nigel's parents don't approve. Will and Hannibal find Hannibal's family increasingly unhappy with their son's relationship... for reasons that will become clear!

As you can imagine there are slightly sexually frustrated teenagers all over the place!

Notes

I'm posting this as I write, and I'm also working on other fics and an original story at the moment too - so I might post this daily, or it might be weekly - depends on when I have time and inspiration :D

Adventures in loving

Will jumped awake, realising he was nodding off. An amused if put-upon noise from Hannibal.

“Sorry, sorry...”

“Mmhmm.” Hannibal gave him a smirk in reply but didn’t put down his pencil.

Will ached. When he had stretched out on the rug he truly thought it would be a comfortable position. But it turned out no position was comfortable when forced to hold it for any length of time. When the aching wasn’t quite so bad, the warmth from the fire and dim lighting had him nodding off only to jerk awake when the ache returned.

When Hannibal had asked him to pose nude so he could draw him - to perfect his ability to sketch the human form in pencil. For science - Will had thought it would be... sexy. It wasn’t.

Earlier that day, Will’s dad had left for work and Hannibal had snuck out of his own home to pick up Will. It was Friday night and he was hoping to get away with spending the whole weekend with Hannibal in Baltimore - even though it had meant Hann lying to his parents. As time passed they seemed to be less and less happy with Will being in Hannibal’s life. Even Mischa seemed to be drawing back from him a little - keeping her distance, perhaps her parents had told her to. Will had never been allowed to stay over but now the Count seemed less than happy about Will coming over at any time at all. And of course it was completely forbidden for the boys to spend the night together anywhere.

That night in the hotel after Homecoming, Will had hoped would be the first of many. That Hann’s parents were letting up a bit. But if anything it worked the other way. They were even more insistent that the boys be low key. They never said it, and if Hann knew he never voiced it, but Will was pretty sure his parents wanted them to break up. Will wasn’t sure what he had done to earn the disdain of the family - he’d always been polite and pleasant. Which wasn’t always easy because Hann’s parents could be a bit much and Will, as Bev often told him, could be a little bitch. They had been super nice when he first met them, but once they realised that he was more than a friend, and then as he didn’t disappear over time but grew closer to their son, they seemed less pleased with him. Maybe it was a snob thing - Hann’s mum had this look of barely hidden disdain on her face when Will told them his dad was a mechanic, a specialist in certain engines though really so pretty skilled. But even so that didn’t seem to be the appropriate background for the future Count’s paramour. Hann had seen the look and spoke quickly in Lithuanian and then took Will home. He had told his mum off for being rude. That had been early on and they had been civil since, other than this growing coldness as time passed.

When Will told his dad he and Hann were going to Baltimore for the weekend the old man had smiled and said “so, drive safe... And don’t touch any liquor.” All seriousness, but then

he grinned like a cheshire cat as he threw a box of condoms to Will. Will had gone so red he thought his face might melt. Hannibal had laughed when Will had told him.

So the weekend had arrived and Hannibal told his parents he was going to visit a university campus for an open day. He said his parents had wanted to come along but Hannibal had put them off by saying that he didn't want the attention his dad's presence especially would draw, so wanted to go alone and anonymously. They had agreed and in a show of true press management, his dad had planned to take his mother for a nice dinner in the city that evening in order to hopefully draw any paparazzi away.

It was true, Hannibal was registered on the open day at John Hopkins with Will as his guest. And so Hannibal had rented a cabin for the weekend in a place called Wolf Trap - an hour or so drive from the university. As soon as he had seen the open fire he had insisted that they light it and that Will pose for the sketch. Explaining that because the university was interested in him because of the anatomical sketches he had included in his application, it was a necessity to hone that skill.

In truth Will had been all too eager. Stripping down as Hannibal lit the fire and then bewildered and not at all amused when Hannibal - after gently posing Will on his front atop the thick rug in front of the fire - actually did take up a sketch pad and begin to draw. When he first took up his pencil Hannibal had started describing what he was drawing, what he was seeing -

"The smooth curve of your buttocks against the backdrop of the fire, the long line of your back, ever so slightly arched. Your hair curling at your neck..." Will smiled at the soothing tone and that was the first part of the night he had had to struggle to stay awake. It was only Hannibal suddenly stopping and clearing his throat that woke Will before he could truly nod off.

"You ok Hann?" Will asked, turning his head that he rested on arms crossed in front of him, see he could see the boy.

The look in Hannibal's eyes was hungry and he had cleared his throat again before saying. "I think I should continue in silence for now... I think I would find it less... arousing."

Will had chuckled and wiggled his bum.

"Will, stay still if you please." Hannibal had admonished.

"You can draw me anytime, let's make the most of being alone." Will had replied, propping himself up on one elbow.

"Not naked, not like this." Hannibal corrected. "I would like this, I want a picture of you that I can look upon when we're not together."

That hung in the air for a long moment before Will, with both hesitation and amusement asked "Hannibal... are you drawing yourself some porn of me?"

There was absolutely no outward sign of embarrassment, and Will knew better than to even think that his boyfriend might be embarrassed. Hannibal instead just smiled enigmatically. Will had laughed and resumed his posing.

That felt like hours ago now and Will had nodded off more times than he could count. This time when he awoke there was a weight pressed against his thighs. Blinking sleep from his eyes he lifted his head and looked over his shoulder to find Hannibal was now also naked and straddling the backs of his thighs. Will Graham was suddenly very hard in the way that only a 17 year old boy could get instantly hard. He let out a groan.

“Hann... what...”

Hannibal shushed him and began laying gentle kisses at the base of his spine whilst he moved further down his legs. He nudged Will’s legs apart and nestled between them, Will’s breath hitching with each light kiss. Hannibal broke away for a moment.

“In the spirit of not wasting this time together... there is something I’d like to try, if you’ll permit me?” His voice was rough with arousal. Between that and the accent Will so loved, he had Will grinding into the rug below, seeking friction.

Will licked his lips, swallowed in an attempt to soothe his dry throat and then nodded, emphatically. He looked back enough to see Hannibal smile, watch - and feel - as the boy pushed his thighs apart, spread his buttocks and lowered his mouth.

“Holy fuck!” Will cried. The movement of Hannibal’s tongue between his cheeks making him arch up off the rug.

He heard Hannibal chuckle.

*

Nigel’s parents were at the club. They were currently a little understaffed and so they both were needed there Friday and Saturday nights when it was especially busy. On nights such as this, Adam stayed over. His parents, he was sure and certainly hoped, did not know. Mr Raki always knew - he made a point of that so that he knew he didn’t need to worry about Adam.

His parents had met Adam a few times and it had been weird. First they were surprised by Adam, thought he was a little odd and not at all Nigel’s type. Then when they got to know Adam a little better, but not well enough to scratch beyond the surface of his quirks, they worried Nigel was actually taking advantage and were angry at their son. They had sat him down after Adam had left one day and told him they thought they should stop seeing each other - that clearly Adam was too young, naive, *special* to really understand what they were doing. They’d fucking used the word special! Nigel stormed off, angry and ended up spending the night at Adam’s. They hadn’t spent any time at Nigel’s place after that, unless his parents were out. Mr Raki, as far as Nigel was concerned, was an awesome guy. Not only was he welcoming and friendly with Nigel - had even told him how good he had been for Adam - but he was cool with them being together. He knew Adam was safe when he was with Nigel.

They grabbed a snack and went up to Nigel's room. They had eaten, watched TV and then ended up cuddled up on the bed together. It was comfortable and Nigel enjoyed it. He absolutely wanted more from Adam when Adam was ready, but in the meantime he actually found this really nice. With people in the past he had never gone slow, and neither had they - some of them were quite determined in wanting something from him - usually to piss off their parents. So much so that he hadn't realised until Adam that there had been many times where he had gone too far and/or too fast but never said anything. He was the bad boy after all - it wasn't necessarily about image, more that he figured you just didn't complain about stuff like that - especially when it seemed to be expected of you. So Adam then was the only person he had truly been intimate with even though he wasn't the first he'd had sex with.

Not that they had had sex. So far there had been kissing. Lots of kissing. And it was so good. Adam was just a curious being and that curiosity extended to everything including exploring his mouth. It also included being curious about Nigel's body and how it differed from his own - so yes, they had been naked together lots. Just Nigel at first, and that had only started with topless and then just underwear and so on as Adam explored each new part with his hands. It had taken him a while to get up the nerve to start taking his clothes off as well, and letting Nigel touch him, as innocent as all the touches were. Sometimes it was fine, other times it was too much for him, but Nigel let Adam guide it. Now though, two months on from their first kiss, this evening was different.

As they had sat watching TV, over the course of an hour or so, Adam had been removing items of clothing. He probably thought he was being subtle about it too, at which Nigel hid a snigger and of course said nothing about the loss of the clothes. In the end Adam was topless and then, realising he could no longer be subtle, he stood and took off his trousers before sitting back on the bed in just his cute little underpants - covered in spaceships (where the hell did Adam get these things?) - and white socks. He said nothing but moved back next to Nigel on the bed. Nigel was still playing oblivious - this seemed to work best for Adam.

And then Adam's hands were on him. Without saying anything Adam started to unbutton Nigel's shirt. Despite his heart rate picking up the pace Nigel remained silent and didn't even look away from the television. When the shirt was unbuttoned Adam pulled it open, exposing Nigel's chest - puberty had been kind enough to already bestow abundant chest hair that held no end of fascination for the almost completely hairless Adam. Adam lay down, curling up next to Nigel with his head on Nigel's chest. Nigel acknowledged the situation at that point - bringing a hand up to play in the curls on Adam's head. They sat like that a long while, both content, until Nigel realised Adam was becoming a little restless. Before he could think of how to phrase a question, aware that he didn't want to spook Adam who might be feeling vulnerable now he was so naked, Adam's hand moved to his crotch.

Nigel hadn't realised he was holding his breath until he had to let it out. Lithe fingers started to undo his jeans, and Nigel felt his heart racing and his lungs working overtime. It was all he could do not to move as his cock started to harden.

Adam was focused, single minded a lot of the time. Like now. So it was a surprise when he suddenly stopped just as Nigel thought he was going to pull him free of the jeans. He didn't look at Nigel when he spoke but Nigel smiled seeing his ears redden with the blush that must cover his face -

“I want to try something... I saw it, um, I have a dvd I bought from the internet and it... there are two men and they... I want to...”

“Darling, you can try anything you like. You just do whatever you’re comfortable with...” He might have said more but the words were strangled off as Adam did then free him from his jeans and sank his mouth down on his now totally hard cock.

*

Two weeks before, Adam had ordered a dvd from the internet. Curious. He and Nigel had kissed and they had sort of touched themselves, intimately, and each other not quite as intimately. Nigel was so wonderful - he took things at Adam’s speed and was never angry or frustrated with him as people sometimes were. But he was also discovering a new kind of wonderful. Nigel’s body was wonderful - so different from his own. The sounds Nigel made when he was turned on were wonderful. The way he touched Adam was wonderful. The way he made Adam feel...

But it was all becoming not enough. Adam knew that if he knew more, had an idea of what might happen next then he would be a lot calmer about the whole thing - hopefully feel less overwhelmed. In that way the dvd had been educational, though Adam wasn’t completely sure how realistic it was considering that the stars all seemed very unreal. All muscles and shiny bodies that seemed more cartoonish than anything. And he was pretty sure that a plumber would never turn up dressed in so little and then have sex with their client. He couldn’t decide whether it would be good or bad for business, concluding that it probably depended on the both the client and the severity of the leak.

Plumbing aside, the men had used hands and mouths and then they had sex and Adam wondered what any and all of that would be like with Nigel. It had taken a while to get up his nerve, but he was in no doubt of the right decision made when he tasted Nigel and heard Nigel moan. Inexperience stopped him being able to make Nigel cum, which on reflection he was glad of because in the dvd it always seemed to go over the men’s faces and Adam was sure he wouldn’t like the mess of it. Instead when Adam’s jaw ached and Nigel pulled him close, Nigel had intended for them to stop. But it seemed so silly to come so far and not end in completion so he had put his hand on Nigel then. Nigel had protested at first but then wrapped his own hand over Adam’s and began moving them - sliding up and down. All the while he was kissing Adam and holding him tight with his other arm. So tight that when he did finally cum over both their hands, he squeezed Adam tighter still.

“Nigel!” He managed to squeak and was immediately released with both apologies and thanks and then pulled into more kisses.

“Darling! You are just... where did you...” Nigel was funny and wonderful when he was lost for words. Adam wanted to make that happen again and often. He felt calm and relaxed - a reflection of how Nigel was feeling. He managed to last a whole five minutes before he absolutely had to wash his hands. Nigel had come with him to the bathroom and they had cleaned up together before returning to the bed. Nigel shucked off his jeans and they both lay in their underwear holding each other.

In the morning Adam woke up with Nigel draped over him and felt comforted by it. He wondered what it would be like to wake like that every day. He felt emboldened by the events the night before and wanted to explore further but worried about the time. The club closed at 4am but Nigel's parents would be there until at least 6am clearing up. He could just see the clock from his pinned position and it was almost 7am.

"Nigel!" Adam whispered loudly. "Nigel, it's almost 7!"

Nigel stirred a little and let out an unhappy sound - he obviously didn't plan to wake up anytime soon. Adam shoved against him but was unable to move him. Though now he did stir but only to pull Adam into a kiss which he found himself melting into. He wanted to pull back and tell Nigel he had to go, he must not have set his alarm and had to go before Nigel's parents got home.

Nigel let out a long low moan as Adam's hands began exploring him...

The door opened suddenly and Nigel's mother was in the doorway. Both boys, dressed only in underwear and both clearly aroused, jumped out of the bed.

After a moment of surprise, Nigel's mum started speaking quickly and angrily in Romanian. Nigel answered back as quickly and angrily until everything went quiet. Adam stood, shaking at the sudden confrontation. He hadn't realised he was running hands up and down his arms in a calming fashion until Nigel caught hold of him. Adam wasn't certain of anything else in the room at that point. Nigel held him tight and spoke soothing words.

Slowly he started to feel more in control but before he could totally ground himself, Nigel's mum spoke in a strong accent - "What is the telephone number for your parents? We have much to discuss."

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Hannibal had a stiff neck when he woke up. It was a bit chilly and he was at an awkward angle. It took him a few minutes to realise, in the semi darkness, where he was. He was spooned up next to Will on the rug in front of the fire - now just burning embers - in the cabin he had hired for the weekend. There was a perfectly good bed in the cabin, although the patterns on the linen he could only describe, politely, as quaint. He felt Will stir beside him with a groan so pulled him close.

"I ache!" Will groaned.

"This rug is thinner than it first seems. My bones are weary too." Hannibal kissed Will's shoulder.

Will laughed. "Yeah that too, but that wasn't the ache I was talking about."

Hannibal joined in the laugh as he ran a hand lightly up Will's side. "Come, we have a full weekend ahead."

He wasn't wrong. The days they spent at the university and exploring the city. Hannibal had already been accepted to study medicine and this was his favoured option so far and it was nice to get acquainted with the place. The evenings they spent in the cabin - in front of the fire or in the bedroom, making the most of the time together.

"I can't wait until we leave home. Just think how great it will be to be here, together. When you're at John Hopkins and I'm at the Law School. Well, not together as in living together, but we would be able to see each other. Stay over. Wake up together. Spend all night fucking."

A raised eyebrow from Hannibal and a scolding "language Will!", though he knew Will had said it for that exact reason - to get a reaction.

Will laughed. "Well, what would you call it Hannibal... when you have me pinned to the bed, buried deep... thrusting..."

"Will!" equally admonishment and the need for Will to stop. They were driving home now and Hannibal was not happy to spend the entire journey painfully aroused, especially as they would now no longer be a position to indulge each other again for a while. His parents were becoming ever displeased with him but he didn't dare try and explain to Will. He would rather resolve it with his parents - make them see sense. Make them understand they would not give each other up.

With the heavy heart of someone who had spent a weekend experiencing the best kind of love to have it taken away until some unknown time, Hannibal drove Will home. They said goodbye on the doorstep - kissing deeply until it was Will who finally broke - a sad look on his face -

"Enough... I... I want more and I can't have it again for now so... let's just..." There was anger there too, though not directed at Hannibal, he knew that. Frustration at the situation that mirrored his own. He knew well too that Will's feelings were the same as his own - that it was becoming almost too painful to be around each other when they were unable to be with each other in totality.

He would speak with his parents again. Enough was enough.

One last chaste kiss shared. Will's eyes a little wet as they broke apart. He retreated into the house quickly and Hannibal took no offence at it.

The drive to his house seemed over in a blink of an eye. He parked and went into the house, finding his parents in the sitting room. This was it. Nerves ate at him, not because he doubted what he was about to do, but knowing it could forever damage his relationship with his parents, his whole family.

"Mother, father." He greeted them with a small and courteous bow. "I have something I need to say..."

He was cut off by his father's hand raised to halt him. Out of habit he did stop and then inwardly cursed himself, but before he could continue his father spoke.

“Hannibal, I will not ask if my suspicions over your trip this weekend are founded.” In Lithuanian - the use of it denoting the serious nature of this talk. “It is of no matter now. You have always known that your... friend... is not acceptable. You chose to pursue this despite knowing it could go nowhere.”

“Father, I love hi-”

The same hand raised again. “Enough of this now. Put away your boyhood fancies, you are to be a man soon. With all that entails.”

Hannibal was about to respond again when his mother spoke gently.

“Please Hannibal, don’t make this harder for yourself. Bedelia is coming to visit.”

Parental Expectations

Chapter Summary

Both Nigel and Hannibal have to deal with the respective parent's issues with their relationships. Both Nigel and Hannibal have revelations for their boyfriends, one parts fluff to one part angst.

Chapter Notes

Please please please remember my darling readers - There will always be fluff with my angst and I am yet to not deliver on a happy ending :D Which is my way of saying things are about to get a bit angsty!! :-/ <3

Mr Raki arrived quickly at Nigel's family home. Nigel had called him, explained the situation in brief, and that Adam was ok - but that obviously didn't stop the guy rushing over which was understandable.

Nigel's mum, Adam's dad, Nigel and Adam sat around the dining table. Adam was between his dad and Nigel and he was not doing great. Nigel held his hand under the table, stroking a thumb over the back of his hand. Nigel's mum didn't look angry but she was clearly concerned.

"It is lovely to finally meet you." Mr Raki smiled. "My Adam thinks quite a lot of your son and I've grown fond of him myself." the smile turned to Nigel and Nigel smiled back. He hadn't been able to tell Mr Raki everything over the phone but enough that he knew his parents had a problem. And he knew Mr Raki would understand that.

"Mr Raki." through his mother's thick accent he could hear her exasperation "I am concerned that this is not a healthy relationship. Adam is clearly..." she searched for a word and Nigel felt himself tense with anxiety and anger over what she might chose. She cleared her throat "he is very young."

"He's 17, almost 18" Nigel interjected. There was barely a year between them.

"Nigel, don't make this harder than it must be." She glared at him. "I love you, but you are... you have been in a lot of trouble and I don't want more for you. You should not take advantage of this boy, he doesn't know what he's doing..."

Nigel's face was red with anger and he had to bite his tongue to stop himself shouting, instead trying to phrase what he wanted to say in his head first so that he didn't just make it worse. Adam had taught him that - Nigel wasn't always great at self control and Adam was very patient in getting him to think before he spoke when he was angry. It had resulted in a lot less detentions at school.

"That's not -" Nigel started through grit teeth but was interrupted.

Mr Raki cleared his throat and smiled gently at both boys before turning to Nigel's mum. "I think I understand your concerns here. I understand that you think Nigel is taking advantage of Adam, and I need to tell you that that is not the case. My son is not stupid, nor a child. He is different, yes, but he's not easily taken advantage of and I would certainly know if that was the case. I understand your concerns because I share them, I am always concerned about Adam as any parent is for their child, and I have never felt less concerned or felt that Adam was more safe than when he is with your son."

Nigel felt a tug in his chest, bolstered by the faith Mr Raki had in him. Adam squeezed his hand but was shivering a little.

Nigel's mum seemed exasperated as though she knew better than Mr Raki. That galled Nigel, though not as much as the fact that his parents clearly thought he was some sort of predator or something fucked up like that, that he would take advantage of Adam.

"I hope you can see my view. Nigel needs to concentrate on finishing school, he cannot afford to get into trouble for -"

Adam spoke up, blurting out his interruption - "Nigel's grades have improved, I've been helping him and he hasn't been in trouble since the Freddies."

Nigel smiled, touched by his little spaceman coming to his defence. And he wasn't wrong. Nigel was never going to be a straight A student but with Adam's help his grades had improved and he was getting into a lot less trouble. With school being the main place they would spend time together - it proved one hell of an incentive not to get suspended when it meant less time with Adam.

Nigel's mum slammed her hand onto the table in frustration "Neither of you know Nigel as well as his own mother, you would surely agree..."

Nigel was glad that she stopped. It had been years since he had got on well with his parents, for which he knew he had a lot of the blame with all the shit he would get up to. But it hurt that their relationship was now so far passed bad that she couldn't think anything but the worst of him. What hurt more was Adam's reaction - he had been on the edge of something the whole time so the hand slamming on the table was enough to push him over that edge. He was now rocking and running his hands up his arms. Both Mr Raki and Nigel went for him at the same time and Mr Raki immediately stopped, let Nigel step in.

Nigel pulled Adam out of his chair and into his lap, holding him close to his chest and muttering gently - "It's ok baby."

Adam bit down on his lower lip and Nigel knew it was his way of holding back the words he might say - calming little mantras that he was holding back in front of Nigel's mum. Nigel ran his hands up and down Adam's back whilst still holding him to his chest. It passed in a couple of short minutes but the way Nigel could feel his mother watching them, made it seem much longer. Adam finally moved his arms up around Nigel's neck and just clung to him, his breath evening out.

Nigel buried his face in the crook of Adam's neck for a minute before looking up at his mum.

"I know you don't understand, I know he's different and you're worried. But I'm good for him, he's good for me. I love him."

There was a small whimper from Adam who then slowly pulled back to look at Nigel with wide eyes. He hadn't said that before, he was sure Adam knew it, but then Adam wasn't great at reading people. Adam let out a bark of laughter and then buried his face back against Nigel who was grinning.

Mr Raki let out a low chuckle, but looking over at his mother, she was clearly not amused. If anything she looked confused and unhappy. Maybe they were an odd pair, even to those who knew them.

"I think I should Adam home."

"Nigel, we have not finished this discussion." his mother said firmly. She seemed bewildered by what had just happened.

"It's ok... I'm ok now." Adam said, pulling away from Nigel at the same time as holding onto him tightly.

"We'll head off, let you two talk about this." Mr Raki first addressed Nigel and then turned to his mother as he rose and coaxed Adam from Nigel's arms. "If you would like to discuss this further at all, if you want more information on anything, please feel free to call me." He smiled.

Nigel reluctantly let go of Adam whose face held more emotion than he had ever seen before - a smile beaming at the same time as a creased forehead where there was still tension. This wasn't exactly the way he had wanted to tell Adam he loved him, but he let himself enjoy the reaction anyway.

After the Rakis had left, Nigel sat back down and took a breath in order to remain calm.

"I wish you could understand that I would never hurt him."

"Nigel... He's vulnerable, can't you see that. What happens if..."

"If what? What do you expect to happen? What little do you think of me that you think I would use him or take advantage."

"Are you sleeping together? Having sex?" Her tone betrayed the fact that she already knew the answer.

In truth he wanted to groan, he wanted to have the same half embarrassed reaction he had had when his parents had asked the same thing when he was with Gabi. But he was younger then, and if ever there was a need to act like an adult in order to ensure he was taken seriously, it was now.

“We’ve been... intimate. And all at Adam’s pace and request.” He kept his tone matter of fact. If this is what it took to get his parents on side with this he was willing to be embarrassed and uncomfortable.

She seemed to think for a moment and then - “What happened before, was that a panic attack? Does that happen often.”

Nigel breathed out and with it went a lot of the tension he was holding within. To have his mother genuinely asking and being interested rather than just dismissing their relationship, was all he could hope for.

“Sort of.” He didn’t want to mention that it could often be worse. “He has this thing called autism. It makes it hard for him to be around people sometimes and sometimes he doesn’t really understand people especially if they are speaking with metaphors. I know to people who don’t know him it can make him seem child-like, but he’s not. He’s smart and kind and gentle and sweet. He’s kept me out of trouble, helped me study, stuck up for me. I don’t understand how this happened between us, I don’t know why he chose me, but I do know it makes me the luckiest person alive.”

When he looked up his mum had a sort of lopsided smile. A look on her face that he hadn’t seen directed at him for many years, not since he started to act out.

“Dragă, you are very good with him. Perhaps you are just the sort of person he needs.” A full smile now that caught Nigel off guard.

“Um, thanks.” Now he did feel a little embarrassed, but he’d survive.

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Hannibal was quiet for a moment.

“Did you hear your mother?” The Count was clearly annoyed. “You knew this day would come Hannibal and yet you insisted on leading on this poor boy. I would not have expected you to act so irresponsibly.”

“I love him.” Hannibal said plainly but quietly.

“Then I am sorry for you both, but it changes nothing.”

Hannibal was quiet, unsure he could talk through the tightness in his throat. Could he really throw over the traditions of his family, the arrangements his parents had made with his future happiness in mind - earn the indifference of his parents - for Will? Of course he could.

“It changes everything.” Hannibal said “I will not give Will up.”

At that the Count was on his feet and Hannibal knew he wanted to strike him but wouldn't, he would never raise a finger to any of them and yet, when angry, he was coiled tight as though waiting to be unleashed. Hannibal had inherited the same trait but hid it well under an exterior cooler than even his father's. The count paused and calmed himself.

"Hannibal." His name sighed out. "I know you think this is something you can negotiate, but it is not. It is not just your happiness at stake. Think of Mischa."

That cut into him.

"Bedelia is coming for the arrangements to be finalised, and then you will return home and be married in Lithuania. You will live there for a year before you can return and take up your studies - if you still choose to." No malice, just plain facts. Hannibal knew his father hoped he would change his mind and would embrace the position he would inherit. "Hannibal..." his name said kindly as his father stepped close and placed his hand at the back of his neck in a comforting gesture. "This betrothal was arranged in your infancy, you knew this to be inevitable - your duty. You should never have taken up with this boy."

"I fell in love with him." Hannibal said softly. He had fallen in love with Will almost the moment he had met him. He couldn't imagine his future without him, much less one with a woman he barely knew. He had only met Bedelia a handful of times, and all those being formal occasions. He hadn't allowed himself to think of the betrothal at first. This wasn't the middle ages, families surely need not marry their children off to each other to secure alliances.

"I'm sorry father, I won't marry her." Slightly louder now but just as soft in tone.

The Count pulled away. "Do you think that is an option?" His tone was loving, caring. Hannibal knew his father didn't want to hurt him as much as he didn't want to hurt his parents. "Hannibal if you do not marry her then on my death all will pass to her family - the castle, our lands, your inheritances, Mischas. Would you see your sister destitute?"

Hannibal's breath hitched and he fought down the burn in his throat. He knew his father was only speaking the truth, he was not trying to hurt him. The second world war had devastated his family, and over time the survival of their ever dwindling fortune became a struggle - the cost of upkeep of the castle and lands had been almost impossible for Hannibal's grandfather, and only became worse each year. By the time Hannibal was born and his father was count the only way to keep it was to become entwined with a wealthy family. He was only a child when the deal was made - their fortune was saved, bolstered until it was able to thrive once more - in return for a title. Bedelia's family were *new money* and desired the legitimisation a landed title would bring. Hannibal was to marry Bedelia - share wealth and title - or else the family would be repaid, leaving the Lecter's once more destitute.

Mischa. It came down to her. It was Mischa or Will.

In his heart he wanted to walk away - leave his family to their misfortune and stay with Will. He had even thought he would do it, right up until the moment he knew he couldn't possibly do it. He would sacrifice his own happiness so that Mischa might have everything she

required or desired. His only regret was that it would also hurt Will - something he had never intended. And he could only blame himself for it.

He would never forgive himself. He would never forget Will. But he had to honour his family.

“Bedelia arrives in three days. You will make her welcome.”

Tone cold, resigned. “Yes father.”

*

Adam was quiet, thinking everything over, while they drove home. Nigel loved him! He wasn't sure all the time about emotions - how to display them or read them. He knew what love was, possibly - he loved his dad, and Harlan - he knew that. But being *in* love? That he was less sure of. But he thought that must be that warm feeling in his chest, which was even better when he felt it in his crotch too - and both things happened all the time with Nigel. He decided to ask Nigel about it and see whether it was the same for him.

“Are you ok?” His dad asked when they got into the kitchen.

“Um.” Adam considered and tried to put into words, sometimes difficult - though right now it was surprisingly easy. “Happy. And sad.”

Mr Raki gave a soft smile and pulled Adam into a hug. “Why sad honey?”

“Nigel's parents don't like him.”

Mr Raki chuckled a little. “They love him, but you have to remember he has been bad in the past and it can be hard to earn trust back.”

“They don't like me...”

“They don't know you hon. If they did, they would love you. How about I call them later and we arrange a proper dinner together? All of us, then perhaps they will start to see a different side to Nigel as well.”

Adam stepped back and returned his dad's smile. “Yes.”

*

Will sat in his room. It had gone dark and he hadn't bothered to turn the lights on. The amazing weekend with Hannibal was enough to remind him that things weren't getting any easier for them. He was looking forward to going off to college so they could finally do their own thing, but that was still so many months away. The more time they spent together, the more often they were intimate, the more he wanted. Maybe they should never have slept together at Homecoming - he could have gone on not knowing how good it would be, not knowing what he was missing out on.

He couldn't help but feel sad about it all. In the beginning Hann's parents had been nice, and then when they realised they were together they seemed a little standoffish. Over time this seemed to progress to indifference and then disapproval. He wasn't sure what he had done to earn it, other than being not good enough for their son. Which he couldn't argue with.

Just a few months, he had to keep reminding himself. Their lives would change forever - they would be away from home, they would be living on their respective campuses - able to visit and stay over as much as they liked. Able to wake next to each other without having to sneak around.

Just a few months

His phone rang and his heart lifted and fell at the same time when he saw it was Hannibal.

"Hi." He tried to sound upbeat, but in truth he wanted to cry.

"Will... Can I see you tomorrow night? I can pick you up from school."

"Sure." Will answered, trying to sound brighter than he felt. Seeing Hannibal was starting to feel bitter sweet. There was silence on the line and Hannibal made an odd noise and cleared his throat. As though he were holding back emotions. "Hann is everything ok?"

"I just... I have something I need to... We'll talk tomorrow. I have to go, my parents are expecting me." The line clicked off before Will could reply. A feeling of dread came over him.

Hot and Cold Truths

Chapter Summary

Whilst things get much better for Nigel and Adam, shit is about to hit the fan for Will and Hannibal.

Chapter Notes

Ok guys, I'm going to warn you now - this is an emotional chapter (good and bad). I had no intention of making it this angsty and this is pretty much the most angsty angst I have ever written and it gets... not quite ugly, but it's emotional. Please, please, please know that true to form there will be fluff and happiness in the end. But just maybe put your little protective armour over your hearts for this one. Sorry :(

More shit was going to go on with Adam and Nigel, but this shit with Hanni and Will gets so angsty that I just can't do that to you all - so please know, Adam and Nigel are pure fluff from here on in (this time) <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Nigel!” Adam looked surprised and delighted when he found Nigel waiting outside his house on Monday morning. “Are you going to drive me to school?”

A wolfish grin. “I was hoping not.” Nigel replied. He was hesitant for a moment. “I know you don’t like skipping class, but I was hoping you’d spend the day with me...”

“Yes.” Adam said immediately with a smile.

Nigel beamed back at him. Watching him and licking his lips as Adam opened the door, slipped into the passenger seat and then continued across until he was damn near almost in Nigel’s lap. He pressed his lips up to Nigel’s which Nigel happily accepted. It was a sweet thing, tender and just a little more than chaste. Adam sat back into his chair with a smile.

“But just this once though.” Adam said sternly. “I don’t want you to get in trouble for skipping school.”

Nigel nodded and started the engine, pulling away with a grin on his face. “I thought it would be harder to convince you than that!” Nigel chuckled.

“How were you going to convince me?” Adam asked, completely innocently - nothing of teasing in that tone and yet Nigel felt his jeans tighten slightly.

Nigel cleared his throat. “I was... going to ask you if you remembered what I said yesterday... Um, and tell you I wanted to spend the day with you and talk about it... show you...”

“That you love me.” Adam finished with a smile.

“Yeah...” Nigel answered hesitantly, keeping his eyes firmly on the road. Very aware that Adam hadn’t said it back, that despite being pretty sure Adam also loved him, there was that anxious doubt.

“You said it in front of our parents.” Adam said lightly, amusement in his tone and a smile on his face.

“Yeah. I did.” Nigel swallowed. Licked his lips. It suddenly seemed really dry in the car.

“I... that was really... funny.” Adam giggled. “Was your mum mad?”

Nigel smiled then and let himself breathe again. “No, actually. I think she’s starting to like me... again. When dad got home the three of us talked and they’re ok about it I think. They want to get to know you a bit better.”

“Dad wants us to all have dinner.” Adam replied. “I was going to suggest Sunday.”

“We might be too tired, the Winter Formal is the night before... I want to make a good impression.”

“I didn’t... um, are we going to the Formal?”

“Oh. Um, only if you want to I guess.”

Adam hummed and smiled, then nodded but didn’t say anymore and so Nigel dropped it for now - truth was he wanted to go. He wanted to take Adam and show him off, but he wasn’t going to say it in - he didn’t want Adam to go just for him. Not after the debacle of Homecoming.

There was silence then for a few minutes, by which time they had reached the turn off Nigel had been heading for. Adam was watching intently out the window now and a few moments later Nigel pulled over in a small carpark. They were deep in the woods, the carpark set up for visitors using the hiking trails.

Nigel got out of the car and then went around and opened Adam’s door. Adam still sat in the seat for a few moments before he too got out.

“You wanted to skip class to come to the woods?”

“I wanted to skip class to bring you to the woods... I wanted to show you something...”
Nigel grabbed his parka from the backseat and shrugged into it before looking Adam over -

he was already wearing a pretty thick coat but he grabbed a spare scarf in case it got any colder.

Adam took hold of Nigel's hand and allowed himself to be lead. They were silent for the twenty minute hike up the trail until they reached the overlook. It was empty - it always was. It was a track off the beaten path with a couple of run down benches and a railing so that you couldn't fall. But the view was amazing - the woods and the town beyond.

"I used to come here sometimes... to think. To get away from my parents. Especially when we first moved here. I didn't know anyone and my English wasn't great and I just couldn't understand why we had left Romania. I needed to get away from them, away from the town. I found this place - it reminds of somewhere my grandmother used to take me when I was a boy."

He looked over to see Adam watching him intently from the bench he'd taken a seat on. Nigel rested back against the railings and smiled.

"Why did you bring me here?" Adam asked, curious.

"I wanted to share it with you. This place means something to me. I haven't come here since I met you, because of you... I wanted to bring you here before, because I wanted to bring you here to tell you that I love you." The last words he had to force out through his anxiety over them.

"Oh." Adam replies with a slight frown. "But you told me last night that you love me."

Nigel sighed and rubbed his hand over his face. "I know... that was an accident. I wanted to bring you here and tell you."

"Oh!" This time in realisation, followed by a small smile. The frown returns slightly "What does it feel like?"

"It feels like love, Adam." Nigel replied a little frustrated. He didn't mean to be frustrated, but at this point he had said that he loved Adam many times without it being really acknowledged, much less returned. He sighed at the continued confused look on Adam's face. "It feels like my heart is going to thump out of my chest when I see you or think about you. I feel sad when I don't get to see you, excited when I do..." He didn't really know how else to put it.

Adam stood and walked to him now with a smile on his face, slipping his arms around Nigel's waist and melting into him, his breath coming out in icy little puffs.

"Oh." He says again, this time a tone of understanding. "I love you too Nigel."

*

Adam smiled as he pulled out his lunch and split it with Nigel - who hadn't thought to bring any. They had walked in the woods until they found their way down to the small lake. It was too big a lake, and the weather not quite cold enough, to freeze completely but the edges were

icy. They had found another bench, a little broken from the proximity to the water and lack of upkeep. When they finished Adam's sandwiches, Adam had nestled against Nigel.

"I was surprised you agreed so quickly to come with me today, maybe I am a bad influence on you." Nigel laughed.

Adam considered it with a smile. "No, I... I just wanted to spend time with you and knew that if I came with you I would get more time with you than if we were in class." He let out a contented sigh and then thought he should, and so did - "not that this will be a regular thing!"

A low chuckle from Nigel and a squeeze that comforted Adam in the way a warm fire in the middle of winter would.

"I wanted to spend time with you after yesterday... Your mum, I know she didn't mean to, but she scared me. And all I wanted to do was curl up with you and have you hold me." He felt Nigel's arms tighten around him. "But we had to go home and you had to stay and I just want your parents to like me so I can stay or you can come with me."

"That'll happen darling. I think they understand better now. We'll have dinner and you're dad will win them over if nothing else - who knows you better than him to convince them this is all ok?"

"You do." Adam answered with a smile. He had never felt so known by anyone, had never been this close with another person, nor really desired to be. People could be loud and unpredictable, and when they realised he was different they could be rude and cruel. Nigel wasn't like that at all with him. The weird thing was, he knew Nigel could be all those things, but he wasn't with Adam and it meant a lot. He had never known anyone - other than his dad - adapt themselves to him rather than expect him to adapt to them - which was often impossible.

"Nigel, would you take me home?"

Nigel pulled back to look in his face. "Are you ok, darling? Is it too cold?"

Adam shook his head and managed a shaky smile. "No... I'm ok, I'd just like to... um, I'd like to be with you, at home. With you."

Nigel's eyes seemed very wide then, and it took a moment for his mouth to form a grin because it had instead gone completely slack.

*

Will saw the Bentley waiting outside the school gates and smiled at the way his heart automatically skipped a beat. How could he ever help that, despite knowing that every time he saw Hannibal lately he just ended up feeling like shit afterwards. Not Hannibal's fault, just a result of the way his parents were being about the whole thing. Best to just try and forget about it when they were together and deal with the sadness it caused after.

"Hey." He said with a smile as he slipped into the passenger seat.

Hannibal looked over at him, a sadness about him. He responded only by reaching over for Will's hand and squeezing it before pulling away to start the engine and drive away.

"Hannibal, what is it?" Will is immediately concerned. He's never seen Hannibal like this. His face is pale with the exception of dark circles around his eyes. He is never normally quiet like this. "Hannibal, what? Talk to me!"

"Let me take you home, we can talk there..."

"Fuck Hann, you're scaring me. What is it? Is it Mischa? Your parents? Are they ok? Are you ok?"

Will was surprised when Hannibal suddenly pulled the car over on the thankfully quiet road. He stared forward, hands gripped on the steering wheel. His lungs were heaving as though he was trying to stop himself crying.

"Please. What is it?" Will couldn't keep the edge of anxiety from his voice - terrified that something had happened to Hannibal or someone in his family - what else could have him this upset? Maybe he had confronted his parents over their disapproval and had a falling out? But it would surely have been a serious falling out to warrant this. Will had never seen Hannibal so obviously upset. It hurt.

"Will..." Hannibal breathed out his name.

Silence descended again in which Will just listened to Hannibal breathing, unsure what to say when he still had no idea what was happening. His skin was prickly - a cold sweat breaking out that reminded him of those nights he sometimes had nightmares.

"Will... I..." A sob breathed out that made Will's blood run cold. "We... we can't see each other any more." He forced the words out. Still looking ahead - frozen in place, much as Will was now. Confusion burned through Will's mind. What the fuck was going on? Was it something he had done? Was Hannibal just unable to cope with the disapproval of his parents?

"I don't... what are you... Is it me? I know I've been down about us not being able to spend time together, but I can... I can wait until we leave for college. I know how it feels - I've wondered if it would be easier just to go our separate ways but then I realise I can't. I love you too much... I can wait..."

"Please, Will. Please stop!" Hannibal raised his voice. He had never done that before. It made Will jump slightly and shudder. "It's not you, not anything you've done. It's me... it's my fault. I should have told you before." He was still facing forward, his knuckles now white from gripping the wheel. His words were starting to sound mechanical as if he had rehearsed them again and again. "I'm engaged already, I should never have kept it from you..."

Will felt like his world had just turned upside down. Absolutely nothing made sense. Were they breaking up? What was Hannibal saying? Already engaged? That wasn't right, this was just a stupid joke. A very unfunny joke. But he looked at Hannibal, frozen in place other than the tears rolling silently down his cheeks.

“I don’t understand.” Will’s voice broke.

“I’m sorry Will. I am betrothed to another and now the time has come for the wedding to be planned.” Despite the tears the words no longer betrayed any emotion - mechanical.

“What the actual fuck?!” Will all but shouted. “What are you talking about? How... who is this person? Do I know them?” Will shook his head. “This doesn’t make any sense.”

“She is in Lithuania... my parents made the arrangements when I was a child.” He was softening slightly now but still didn’t turn to look at Will.

“When you were a fucking child? Hann... How... We’ve been together over a year and this is the first you tell me of this?” Will felt like a dagger of ice had been plunged into his heart. “I don’t even know who the fuck you are!”

“I didn’t think it would come to this, I thought I could get out of it...”

“But you never told me. You took away my ability to choose whether I wanted this or not, knowing...” He swallowed down some emotion. “Knowing that it wouldn’t mean anything in the end.”

“It means something, you mean something. You mean everything to me Will... If I could... If there was a way...” Hannibal’s voice was trembling.

“And now this is it... We’re over.” Not a question. No wonder Hann’s parents had a problem with him. Were they concerned for him or did they think he knew? God, if they thought he knew, what they must think of him.

“Will...” Finally he looked at him, his eyes red and face wet. Will could practically see his broken heart but his own pain screamed within him.

“No. Take me home. Just... take me home.” Will fought the urge to cry.

*

Hannibal felt like he was being crushed from the inside out. He just wanted to pull Will to him and hold him and never let him go.

The rest of the journey was silent and when they arrived outside Will’s place he jumped out immediately and slammed the door behind him. Hannibal wanted to just sit there and cry but he couldn’t walk away with this being the last interaction with Will. He couldn’t imagine he’d want to be friends after this, besides which Hannibal was about to be relocated to Lithuania. He got out of the car quickly and went after Will. Will was still at the door, struggling in his emotional state, to get his key in the door. He managed it as Hannibal came up behind him.

When Hannibal went to follow, Will turned and blocked the door.

“Please Will... let me explain. Please don’t let this be the last we say to each other.”

“Fuck you Hannibal.” Will’s tone was low and cold. He started to close the door and for a moment Hannibal considered blocking it and entering the house, but he knew he couldn’t do that.

But the door didn’t close. Will seemed frozen for a moment, pain writ over his face. A moment later he had grabbed Hannibal around the back of the neck and pulled him forward, meeting his lips in a crush of teeth and tongue. Hannibal didn’t - couldn’t - resist Will as he pulled him through the house. Lips barely leaving each other until they were in Will’s room and the door was closed behind them.

Will was pulling at Hannibal’s clothes as well as his own. Hannibal, hesitant at first, began to assist. He wasn’t sure what this was, but if it was the last time he would see Will then... he needed this. Will needed this and he needed it all the more for that.

Will was already in his boxers by the time his hands were back on Hannibal, stripping him of his trousers. He pulled down Hannibal’s trousers and underwear until they were around his ankles and then pushed him back on the bed. Hannibal’s shirt was still half on, his school tie half fastened still holding it together at the top. Will now was naked, flushed red all over.

“Will...” Hannibal wanted to say he was sorry, to hold Will to him. He would always want to be the person to comfort Will when he was upset, and now he was the cause of that upset. He wanted to say something, anything, that might make it better. Not that anything would. And not that he could say anything because Will’s hand immediately and forcefully came up and covered Hannibal’s mouth so he couldn’t talk.

In short order Will moved around him, everything becoming a little of a blur - his head spinning with emotion. He wasn’t sure how much time had passed, Will’s hand was gone, so was Will, but he couldn’t see through the tears now blinding him. Then there was a hand on his cock and his body arched up.

“Will...” he breathed. “Yes... Please, Will...” He wasn’t sure what was in Will’s mind but he needed this. He didn’t want to ever not have this but that was inevitable now. So this was it. This was all there was.

The hand was gone and Will moved over him, straddling him.

“Oh... Will...” Hannibal’s words were cut off as the hand came back to his mouth, silencing him again. He could see the pain and determination in the face now above his own. The anger and hurt.

Will’s hand acted to stifle his cry as he felt Will sink onto him - taking him in little by little as he moved. Time seemed to stand still as Hannibal felt his heart breaking. He wanted to hold Will, he wanted this to be sensual and intimate as it had been before, but that seemed impossible now. Pleasure sparked through him as he was gripped tight within Will. Another groan held back by Will’s hand. Once Will was seated flush against Hannibal, completely filled, he began to move. Slowly at first in order to accommodate Hannibal with as little pain as possible.

Will began to ride Hannibal's cock, his hand now moving from Hannibal's mouth - not that he could speak any longer. His breath came hard and painful through his lungs and tight throat. A pain in his chest, pleasure tingling through him. He grabbed hold of Will's hips and held them - no pressure on them, not holding him still, just holding him steady as he fucked himself on Hannibal's cock.

Hannibal, still blinded by his own tears, kept his eyes tight shut. The pain in his chest hurting all the more as he felt Will's tears drop down onto him. There were none of the light moans and gentle whispers Hannibal had grown to love, and he didn't dare make a noise himself other than the involuntary grunts that escaped him.

Will moved forward, pressing their foreheads together, tears falling freely. Now there were little noises, tinged with something - anger? hate? - as the angle suited Will. He felt Will reach between them to touch himself. Hannibal automatically moved a hand from Will's hip to take hold of him instead as he had done in the past, but his hand was batted away with an angry grunt. Hannibal strangled an anguished cry. After a moment he put his hand back to Will's hip and this time not just to steady. He gripped hold of him and used the purchase to thrust up into Will. He wanted to give Will what he wanted, wanted to give him everything. All of himself, even if only in this moment. Will let another sound escape - pleasure tinged with resentment, or so it felt.

"Ahh... yes..." Will's words seemed to escape him without thought or notice.

Hannibal was losing himself to the pleasure too. Emotional pain swarmed through him, chased by the physical pleasure. Being in Will, being surrounded by Will, being joined together with him in a way that deepened the connection, the emotions. Even now, even through Hannibal's pain and Will's anger. His heart was almost losing beats as Will continued to take everything from him. And then Will was crying out, his muscles were squeezing tight around Hannibal who thrust once, then twice and then was spent.

They stayed for a moment, panting as Will gently rode out his orgasm to its full completion. Foreheads still pressed together. Will leaned in and took Hannibal's lips in a hungry kiss, which Hannibal returned. He could almost forget everything, he could almost be transported back to the weekend in the cabin.

But then the spell was broken - he had reached his arms up to encircle Will, to pull him close and hold him tight. But Will batted his arms back and moved off him, causing Hannibal a little discomfort until he slid completely free. Will had rolled onto his back and was panting, staring at the ceiling. Hannibal wanted to roll over and hold him, but with the last attempt rebuffed, he knew he needed to ask first.

"Will... Can I..."

"Get out Hannibal." Will's tone was cold and he had slung an arm over his face - eyes and tears hidden. He lay, a naked mess - cum in him and on him and his body still trembling with the pleasure he had felt. He had never been so beautiful and awful to Hannibal in that moment.

“Will... please...” He didn’t want to force the embrace, he was happy to leave it but he just wanted to at least talk. To salvage something of this. But his words were cut off once more.

“Just fucking leave.” Will all but shouted.

It went through Hannibal like a knife. Will struggled with people often, not as Adam did, but in his own way. All except Hannibal. Until now. Will moved and curled in on himself, his back to Hannibal. He wanted to hold him, comfort him. But they were beyond that now. He had hurt Will too deeply by keeping this secret. Will would find no comfort in him, only pain.

Hannibal didn’t speak, there was nothing that he could say, as he pulled up his trousers and left the room. He stepped into the hall and closed the door, listening to Will’s sobs as he pulled the rest of his clothes back together and considered once more going to Will and holding him. But he couldn’t do that to Will and he couldn’t be rebuffed again. He, quietly, left.

*

Nigel ran his tongue out over his bottom lip and swallowed, almost painfully. He couldn’t believe this was about to happen. Was this about to happen?

They were in Adam’s room, his dad was out - grocery shopping night, he’d be gone a while Adam said. The way he had said it - not teasing, not sexual. So matter of fact, but... delighted. And Nigel was fucking delighted too.

Adam had put on the dvd that he had bought. In typical Adam fashion, this was not for titillation but for instruction - he wanted to show Nigel what he wanted to do because he wasn’t sure he’d be able to explain it right.

And that was how Nigel now found himself in Adam Raki’s room. With Adam Raki moaning with something between pleasure and impatience as Nigel pulled out the fingers he had inside him. The fingers he had been using to work open Adam Raki. He made sure the condom on his cock was rolled all the way down and now he was moving over him, over Adam Raki’s beautiful pale form.

“Nigel... wait...” Nigel paused completely still, frozen in action as he was about to enter him. He started to slowly move back - he had known this might be a possibility and he was ok with it - whatever Adam was ok with. But then Adam grabbed him and stopped him moving.

“I want to...” He told Nigel with a smile. “So far it...uh, it feels really good.” The smile beamed. “But, in the dvd they... um... they were...”

Nigel smiled as he realised what Adam was trying to say. In the dvd they had done it on all fours. “Oh, um... we can do it like that if you like. But I’d like to see your face...” Nigel allowed a wolfish grin.

Another beam from Adam. “Oh! I didn’t know we could do that. Ok, yes, let’s do that...”

Nigel swallowed again and damn near tumbled over, his limbs were so weak with the thrill of it all. He must have been still a little too long because Adam squirmed and added - "Now... please?"

Nigel leaned in and kissed Adam then. Adam Raki. Adam fucking Raki.

The kiss was soft and languid. He moved forward gently, a couple of strokes of his cock to ensure it was as lubed up as he thought - he'd probably used much more than needed, and he'd worked a lot into Adam, but he wanted this to be right.

They both held their breath as Nigel pressed into him and stopped. Adam's eyes were wide and Nigel was momentarily terrified, but then Adam let out his breath, broke into a smile and said - "This is good." He'd explained to Adam that it would hurt and Adam had reassured him he would be ok - was made to promise to say if he needed to stop.

Nigel swallowed hard. Again.

He kept it slow, easing in little by little and then keeping it gentle. He moved forward a little and lifted Adam's hips, allowing him to go deeper, hoping... and there it was - Adam practically exploded in a wave of pleasure and he knew he had angled himself at the right spot. Adam's hands gripped hold of Nigel's upper arms, fingers digging in. Nigel worried it was too much for him, stopped again. Waited for... something.

"More..." The word was a breathless whisper that turned Nigel on so much he wasn't sure how he didn't cum right then. So he moved again, and again. Each time a little moan escaped from Adam and his heart skipped a beat. How was Adam even possible, how was this even possible.

"Do you want to cum baby?" Nigel asked gently. He knew from when they'd sometimes masturbated together that it got too much, Adam got too sensitive and he had to stop.

"Y... yes..." A breathless Adam now as their bodies moved together. Nigel reached between them and gently took Adam in hand, stroking him in time with the slow thrusts. More whimpers, little groans.

Oh so gradually Nigel picked up the tempo, still as gentle as possible.

"Nigel... I'm... I'm going to..." Nigel swallowed his words in a kiss as Adam came between them. Adam tightening around him was more than enough to bring him right over the edge after him. They rode through it and then slowed to a stop, panting against each other.

Nigel went to move off, give Adam his space, but he was held in place by lithe arms. They held each other for a while before Adam finally needed to move - a little unhappy with the mess, they went to the bathroom to clean up. Adam beaming the whole time.

"I can't believe we did that." Adam smiled.

"Believe me, neither can I. I still can't even believe you're with me!" Nigel let out a disbelieving laugh.

Adam's face suddenly fell. "I think we made a mistake..." He didn't seem anxious but maybe concerned, enough for Nigel to be immediately worried.

"What... Why? Wasn't... are you ok?"

"I think we were meant to wait until the Winter Formal." Adam frowned. Nigel had no idea what to say. "Isn't that what people do - special occasions. Like Will and Hannibal did it after Homecoming - Will told me. And then in future you'll always remember I guess. Like it will always be a special day."

"It's still special." Nigel laughed, pulling Adam into a hug. Adam seemed appeased by this but then still added-

"We'll just have to remember that it was five days before the Winter Formal."

Nigel was sure he'd never fucking forget.

Chapter End Notes

HOLY SHIT! WHAT DID I JUST DO??? WILL, HANNIBAL - I'M SORRY!!! D:

Also - I usually don't write characters having unsafe sex, but it felt like that would be the way it would go down right then and Will would have (hopefully correctly) assumed they are each other's first. That said - PLAY SAFE KIDS!!!

Future People

Chapter Summary

Bedelia arrives, Hannibal writes an apology to Will. Nigel, Adam and their families go for dinner after a little texting silliness.

Chapter Notes

Ok, still a little more angst aftermath, but things are moving forward and there is spacedogs fluff!

“Miss Du Maurier, you are very welcome.” The Count took her hand in both of his as she entered the foyer.

“Please, call me Bedelia, after all we are to be family.” She smiled and the Count looked thoroughly charmed. Hannibal felt sick.

He stood on the second lowest step of the grand staircase that swept into the foyer. He didn’t want to step down and be in that room with her. As unfair as it might be, he hated her, hated her family. Hated his parents. Hated himself. *I’m sorry Will.*

“Hannibal.” Spoken not sharply, but with command, by his father. Hannibal felt a chill come over him as he stepped down and walked to Bedelia Du Maurier. She held out her hand and he made a low bow as he took it and kissed it.

“Miss Du Maurier.” He acknowledged her.

“Hannibal.” She replied with a smile as he let her hand go. “It’s nice to see you again.”

Hannibal acknowledged this with a nod but couldn’t bring himself to offer a false but polite response. He knew he was being rude and knew he would be admonished by his father, but he had no energy or inclination to be polite. And anything his father could say or do would not be as bad as the reality of having to marry this girl. Of not being with Will. Even if she were perfectly nice, she wasn’t Will. And from the few occasions they had met at formal functions she struck him as snotty and rude. But then what was to be expected of a family that wished to buy a title and practically enslave him as a consequence.

Hannibal stepped back a pace and his father seamlessly continued the introductions - his mother and then Mischa. Mischa for her part looked about as pleased as Hannibal did. She

didn't know everything that was going on, not the details, but she did know that Hannibal had had to break up with Will because their parents wanted him to marry Bedelia. She was set to hate her on principle, but Hannibal had asked her not to. It was unfair and would be unbecoming of a young lady like Mischa.

If Bedelia sensed the hostile welcome from either of them, she did not let on.

"Hannibal, if you would show Bedelia to her room." His father's tone did not allow for a refusal so he merely nodded and stepped forward, offering his arm to his betrothed. She took it with a polite smile and Hannibal lead the way to the small wing that housed the guest accommodations.

"Hannibal, you do not seem pleased to see me." Did he imagine the cruel twist to her smile?

"In truth Miss Du Maurier, I never truly believed this day would come." He kept his tone level, but he told the truth. He had been so young when it had been arranged and he had grown up with it. First the knowledge that this distant thing would take place, and then as he got older he just couldn't believe that such a thing would ever take place - one or both of them would meet someone else or some reason or other would have their respective parents realising they had essentially enslaved their children and call it all off. Of course, the few times he had met Bedelia it had seemed a less dim prospect to her - as with her parents, the title was all she thought of. Clearly she had been promised it all her life, raised to believe she deserved it even if it was at the cost of another's happiness. Of two people's happiness. His chest constricted slightly as he thought of Will. Beautiful Will posing in front of the fire.

He touched a hand ever so briefly to his chest. The drawing forever carried in the inside breast pocket of his blazer. Had he sketched it then knowing Will wouldn't be his much longer? No. he truly had believed he could walk away from his family.

"Well, the day has come now Hannibal. As we are to be married after your graduation I think you should get used to calling me Bedelia." Had she smiled gently he might have seen something sweet in her. Not anything he could ever love or even abide this situation for, but something he could tolerate. As it was the glint in her eye was that of someone who knew they had the upper hand. Perhaps she wasn't as enslaved in this situation as he was.

He was relieved that they had reached her room, one of the staff was unpacking her bags for her already.

"I have discharged this task my father set me - here is your room." He indicated and her eyes narrowed, perhaps she didn't find him as easy to control as would please her. "Good day Miss Du Maurier."

Hannibal turned and walked away his mind set on telling Will everything, whether he would hear him or not.

*

So as not to clash with the Winter Formal (which they had agreed they would go to), or with the work schedule of either parents, dinner was arranged for Thursday night after school.

They'd had enough time to go home and freshen up, change and head to the restaurant. Nigel and Adam texting each other the whole time they were apart.

A: I don't have a suit. should I have borrowed one?

N: A suit? I'm not wearing a suit. It's not a formal dinner Adam! :-*

A: I could wear the tux I hired for Saturday night?

N: You've hired a fucking tux? Shit, I'm going to look underdressed.

A: What are you wearing to the formal? Are you wearing a suit then, because that is formal.

N: I'll wear my birthday suit :D

A: I googled that... it means you'll be naked. I think you're joking.

A: Are you joking? I can't tell over messaging ?

N: I'm joking Adam. It's too fucking cold, har har har! ;D

A: I still don't know what to wear tonight

N: Your birthday suit? ;P

A: Nigel, this is serious!

N: I'd seriously like to see you in your birthday suit! :D ;D <3

A: I'm going to stop texting you now because you're not helping and I'm nervous.

N: I'm sorry baby :(I just wanted to keep it lighthearted. I'm nervous too.

A: I still don't know what to wear. What are you wearing?

N: Jeans. The blue shirt with the little dogs.

A: I really like that shirt! :D

N: I know ;D

N: Adam, just wear something you'd wear to school. You're the best dressed person I know!

A: But those are school clothes.

N: Adam! :-/

N: Adam?

A: Ok. I'll wear my light blue shirt - it doesn't have dogs but it will match yours

N: I'll find you one with dogs on it :D But not in time for tonight

A: Nigel, I will look silly in a dog shirt! Don't you think I'm picked on enough? :p

N: Ok, one with planets on it or something then

N: Did you just make a joke? 0_0

A: I won't look as good as you do in that shirt :P I'm not attractive like you, or Will or Hannibal

N: You're much better looking. I don't want to sleep with Will or Hannibal!

A: Because I'm better looking? (I'm not sure that is true)

N: Yes, but also because I only want to sleep with you darling! (yes it really is!) :P

A: I'm still not dressed. I should hurry. I'm already nervous!

N: Ok baby.

N: Wait! If you're not dressed, what are you wearing right now?

A: My underwear. I'm just trying to find my shirt.

N: Which pair?

A: The one with planets on. Should I change them?

N: No baby, wear them. I love that pair. That's all you have on right now?

A: Yeah, I'm still looking for the shirt but you keep distracting me.

N: You're distracting me too darling!

A: I'm not, you keep texting me.

A: Nigel? Are you still there? You've gone quiet

N: I was thinking about you in your underpants.
 A: I have the shirt on too now.
 A: Nigel?
 A: Nigel? Is everything ok?
 N: Sorry baby... I was still thinking about you in your underpants ;D
 A: Nigel, were you masturbating?
 N: I'm nervous. It relieves tension! ;D :P <3
 A: Maybe I should have masturbated. I don't have time now. It took so long to find the shirt.
 N: 0_0
 N: If you had gone with the birthday suit option you'd have had time ;P
 N: Adam?
 N: It was a joke.
 A: I know. I was just on the internet. I wanted to order a toy.
 N: ?
 A: From the dvd - there is that one bit with the little toy.
 N: What? You're doing this now? Shouldn't you be getting ready?
 A: You masturbating reminded me.
 N: What toy? What are you talking about?
 A: The sex dvd - they had the little toy that was shaped a bit like a rocket.
 N: Holy fucking hell Adam!!!
 N: I think I need to jerk off again 0_0
 A: Ok. You do that, I have to finish getting ready.
 A: Thanks for talking with me, I feel a bit less nervous now :)
 A: Nigel?
 A: Nigel?
 A: Ok, I'll see you there then.
 N: Sorry. My hand aches. I'll see you there <3

*

Nigel wondered how Adam Raki could be constantly so mesmerising! Adam had just arrived with his dad, wearing that blue shirt that brought out his amazing eyes. Nigel and his parents had been there a few minutes and were already seated, but without thought or hesitation Nigel was on his feet and greeting them. He shook Mr Raki's hand quickly and then pulled Adam close to him and nuzzled into his shower-fresh curls. A contented hum from Adam sent a blaze of adoration through him.

Apparently the embrace went on too long because his dad noisily cleared his throat. Nigel pulled back, pecked a kiss on Adam's cheek and then turned to his parents.

"Dad, this is Mr Raki." They took it from there introducing themselves and taking seats at the table. Nigel had saved the one next to him for Adam, though his dad had initially expressed that Adam and Nigel should not sit close. It had been his mum who had interjected -

"Adam is sensitive, if he gets upset maybe Nigel should sit close - he has a way with him."

Nigel's dad was reluctant - "I'm not sure I approve of this, so it seems inappropriate that Nigel should comfort him. He should sit with his father."

At that Nigel's mum had given a look. A few quick words exchanged in Romanian and now his father agreed they could sit together. Nigel shared a smile with him mum for the first time in years, warmed to know he had her onside.

When they sat, Adam grabbed Nigel's hand under the table before Nigel had the chance to do the same. Nigel squeezed the hand and brought it up to rest on the table before looking at Adam with all the love he felt.

"It's all going to be fine." Nigel said and watched, relieved, as Adam exhaled the breath he had been holding since he sat down.

*

The letter had arrived overnight - hand delivered. It was Friday and Will hadn't been to school since Monday, feigning illness. Or more correctly not, but a broken heart wasn't something you could get a doctor's note for.

"Will?" A knock at his door a moment before his dad appeared. "Will, this came for you." He set the letter down on the nightstand and then placed his hand on Will's brow - actually sweaty from nightmares that didn't seem likely to come to an end. "You still feeling unwell?"

"Yeah." Will croaked out, his throat raw from crying. He hadn't told his dad what had happened. He hadn't told anyone. It just seemed easier to ignore the world and try to process it all in his own way. Not to mention he felt like an idiot. How could he have been with Hannibal so long and not known he was keeping something from him. Even so, as he looked back he just couldn't find anything that might have given it away.

"Do you want me to call Hannibal?" His dad asked softly.

Will sat bolt upright in his bed. "No!" Too loud, too abrupt. "Um, no. I... he has a lot on this week at school, and with this family. I don't want to bother him. I'll probably feel better soon."

"The Winter Formal is tomorrow, hopefully you'll feel up to that." His dad smiled in an attempt to encourage. He ruffled Will's hair and left the room.

Will picked up the letter and immediately recognised Hannibal's cursive handwriting. He considered ripping it up or burning it, but instead sat numb for a few minutes, giving time for those considerations to pass. With shaking hands he tore open the envelope and unfolded a letter in the same hand - usually neat but now scrawled in places and the paper stained in places with tears. It made his chest constrict painfully.

Will,

I hope you will allow yourself to read this letter. I knew calling you would result in your hanging up and I don't think I could easily see you in person for now. And I expect you feel the same on that issue. I wish it were not the case as I miss your beautiful eyes. I miss you.

I hope that you will read on to the end and receive my apologies even if you do not forgive me. And I could not expect that of you. I would never ask it of you.

I should elaborate on this situation. A situation not of my making, not that it excuses my part in it - in deceiving you.

Ever since I was a child I was told that one day I would grow up and marry a fine lady and she would be my countess. When I was very young I just thought it some fairy tale. As I grew older I learned more bit by bit and understood that there was a specific lady in mind. Her family had rescued ours - saved us from the brink of financial ruin. In return I was to marry her. Even with the knowledge of truth, and having started to meet her now and then when attending formal events, it still seemed as a fairytale. How could it not? How could such a thing be real in this day and age?

And then, four years ago, my father's diplomatic position brought us here and it seemed no more than a distant story. We were so far removed from life in Lithuania, and those few times I had met my betrothed seemed almost as though I had imagined them.

This cannot be an excuse, but believe me when I say that it seemed so unreal as to be untrue.

And yet I knew it was true. But when we moved here, I cannot explain why, I just assumed that it no longer stood. America seemed so foreign and modern. There is no aristocracy here, people do not use their children as bargaining chips. As time went on I started to believe, with no basis for this, that the marriage would never take place. That surely one or both she and I would meet someone else, or our parents would see sense. That the arrangement would be void. It was one reason why I never told you - I never saw it as real. This was my mistake and I'm sorry that we're both having to pay the price of this. The other reason I could never bring myself to tell you was that I felt ashamed. I was no more than a pawn for my family's needs, and what could you think of that? Of my me and my family that such an arrangement had been made?

It was only when my parents realised how serious we were that the arrangement was brought to the fore. And I'm sorry, I should have told you then at least. But by then I had decided that despite the will of my family, even if it meant being disowned, I would not submit to their arrangement.

And Will, I wish I could say that I tried harder to resist it. But I did try, I told my parents I would not marry Bedelia, that I loved you.

But now I have to submit. For my parents I care little of their misfortune in this. I could have easily left them. But it is Mischa who I cannot desert. I know you know how much I love my sister. I would die for her, I would kill for her. And so now I must marry for her - to secure her fortune and her place in the world. Of them all, I cannot leave her destitute.

I know you might understand and perhaps even forgive this. But I do not hope the same for my not telling you. That was badly done and I was wrong to keep it from you. As you said - I took away your ability to choose to be with me, knowing that it would have to end. For that I can never apologise enough. I am sick at myself. At this situation. At having hurt you and having taken your choice in this as mine has been taken from me.

I would ask that we could remain friends but I know I would not be able to have only a friendship, it would be too painful.

I know one day you will meet someone who will be totally honest and loving with you Will and you will be happy. You will laugh and love and not think of me, and I'll be glad of it. But in this moment I must tell you, this was the only thing I ever kept from you. You know this, surely. It matters not. I just wish you happiness.

Your ever devoted friend
Hannibal Lecter VIII

Will had to stop reading several times. Reread parts of it. In reality it changed nothing. It was good to know Hannibal's side, even if he was right that Will would not forgive him. All that time and he had said nothing. A sudden wave of nauseous anger overtook him and he screwed the letter into a ball, throwing it across the room.

He had to move on, he had to forget Hannibal because there was no coming back from this. Even without the lie by omission, Hannibal would be married. At least he would return to Lithuania so that Will had no chance of running into him. No chance of ever seeing him again.

He couldn't help the anguished sound that escaped him. He still loved Hannibal. He couldn't imagine never loving Hannibal, even through the hurt. This had never felt like a teen romance that would end when they left for college. He'd had those relationships before he met Hannibal, if adolescent adoration and fumbling could be called that. With Hannibal it felt like those couples who told years later how they married their high school sweetheart. Corny, so corny, and yet he really had felt that way.

Will let out a heavy sigh chased with a short sob. Suddenly feeling much older than his 18 years.

He would wallow another day in it, and then tomorrow he would start to heal, he told himself. He lied to himself.

Wrong Hearts Dancing

Chapter Summary

It's the night of the Winter Formal - Adam and Nigel are adorable, Will is drunk and Hannibal's pretty sure he'll never be happy again...

Chapter Notes

Ok, this is the beginning of the end for the angst - there is a happy ending in sight!

Nigel was in a good mood. Better than good. Life was pretty fucking amazing. After an evening with their parents, during which their dad's got on like a house on fire and bonded over a shared interests, things had been great.

Both fathers had served in the military of their respective countries which gave them common ground and respect for each other. And of course, Mr Raki was so well versed in explaining Adam had autism that he had Nigel's dad nodding along and even giving a reassuring smile to Nigel and Adam as they sat with hands clutched together. It helped that Nigel's parents seemed to find a sudden willingness to understand, not only Adam but their own son. Again, it helped that Mr Raki had opened with twenty whole fucking minutes of praise for Nigel - how fond he was of Adam's boyfriend, how good he was for and to Adam. His mum had stared at him throughout, as though seeing a new side to him. And that wasn't wrong - he'd had an increasingly poor relationship with them since they moved to the US, only made worse by his increasingly poor behaviour.

He had resented being dragged from Romania, missed his grandparents and friends. He had started acting out and never stopped. Never stopped hating having been uprooted. Until he met Adam. And now he couldn't thank his parents enough for bringing him here. He couldn't imagine his life if he hadn't met Adam.

He straightened his tie in the mirror. He didn't own a suit and he wasn't sure how he'd look in a tux, but he hadn't needed to think about it, as it turns out. He woke up Saturday morning with his dad knocking at his bedroom door - insisting on taking him shopping for a nice suit to wear to the formal. Adam had told them at the dinner about the tux he had rented - he left out that he had rented one because of what happened to the one he borrowed last time.

"Can't have you showing that young man up!" His dad had beamed as they looked through the options. Who knew there were so many kinds of suit. In the end he didn't go with a tux -

he went with classic black suit with a slim straight black tie. The shirt was red, dark enough to not stand out too much, but enough to be different.

He'd asked Adam if he wanted to go to a hotel after the dance, not anything as fancy as Hannibal had for Will, but he'd said no. He was already nervous about the dance, the only thing that made him want to go was being with Nigel, so he needed to know he was going somewhere familiar and safe afterwards. Nigel was just fine with that, especially as the parents were all happy with him staying over too. No more sneaking around.

He checked his tie one last time before heading downstairs. He was surprised to find both his parents waiting for him.

"Mike is covering so we will go in late, we didn't want to miss you leaving. Looking so handsome." His mother smiled and stepped forward, adjusted his tie and smoothed down his lapels. "You scrub up well, Adam is a lucky boy."

Nigel, for the first time he could ever remember in his life, blushed.

His dad laughed, not to make fun, but kindly - slinging his arm around Nigel's shoulders. "Who would have imagined such a thing as this, our young man dressed up smart?!"

"Ok, ok..." Nigel shrugged them off, embarrassed by the attention. "I have to go pick up Adam."

He picked up his overnight bag and rushed out the door quickly, his parents laughing. He might not admit it, but it warmed him.

*

Will had waited until his dad had left Saturday afternoon for his fishing trip with his buddies, before he opened the liquor cabinet. He wasn't sure it would help. His dad drank a lot when his mum left, but he pulled himself back together after a while. Had it helped him? No, of course it hadn't, but Will reasoned that it at least gave him a release from the pain when he was so far into oblivion that he couldn't remember anything.

By the time the evening rolled around Will had worked his way through almost a whole bottle of whiskey. He stopped just as he thought he might throw up. He dragged himself to his room to collapse in the bed. The bed, which along with the room was now spinning slightly, where he had fucked Hannibal a few days earlier - for the last time. He laughed and rubbed his hand roughly over his face. Well, he had managed almost an hour without thinking of Hannibal. Clearly alcohol wasn't the answer. He didn't think he was brave enough to try drugs, his brain felt addled half the time anyway. Besides which he had no idea where he might get some from.

There had to be something else. Maybe he would just go to a bar in town and pick up some stranger. Screw into oblivion. Would that erase Hannibal? Maybe a bar was a bad idea - he was underage and he might be drunk but not drunk enough to invite the sort of shame it would bring to get picked up by the police. He couldn't do that to his dad.

He flopped onto the bed and looked at the cupboard. The door to it was open - he had been a slob all week and the door had been opened and then unable to close as his dirty clothes piled up next to it. He could see the cellophane wrapping on the suit he had had dry-cleaned.

*

Adam was beyond happy. His skin tingled. Nigel had picked him up - looking very attractive in his new suit - and they had driven together to the dance. Or at least once they had pulled away from the curb - they had kissed for sometime on Nigel's arrival. Both hard by the time they broke apart and Nigel laughed when he suggested they get to the dance before they ended up not going at all.

They drank punch, and danced and smiled. Nigel didn't stop smiling at him. They had been there two hours before Adam even realised how much time had passed, he was having so much fun. He had never expected that of a school dance, but it was like they were there alone, so focused was Nigel's attention on him. And his on Nigel.

Nigel had gone for a bathroom break, leaving Adam at their table, when Adam spotted Will.

"Will." He called out and waved. He watched as his cousin frowned at him, must have recognised him and then waved back. Will didn't look well. He knew he'd been sick all week and was really surprised he had made it to the dance. He continued to watch as Will seemed a bit unsteady on his feet - maybe he was still really sick. He could see Will was talking to someone who was currently obscured by the pillar - Hannibal must have brought him to cheer him up from being sick. Adam smiled, it was a nice thing to do.

Adam had intended to wait where he was for Nigel, but he decided to go over and say hi to Will and Hannibal. He was excited about being at the dance and being ok with it. He knew it was only Nigel being there that made it manageable for him. Even so, that made him happy. Adam got up and started over.

It wasn't until he could see past the pillar that he realised Will wasn't talking to Hannibal, it was a girl. It took him a moment to remember her - he had seen her around the school but he was sure he knew her from somewhere else. He remembered when he looked at her again - it was Alana, Will had dated her the summer before he met Hannibal. He didn't realise they were still friends, they didn't ever seem to talk during school time.

"Hi Will." Adam beamed when he reached them. Will just nodded an acknowledgement and Adam frowned. Will's head had lolled slightly, he must still be really sick. "Are you ok?"

Will smiled and nodded. "Oh yeah. Just peachy."

Adam returned the smile, a bit unsure. Will didn't seem himself and it worried Adam. "Where's Hannibal?" He asked, looking around.

Will's bark of laughter made him jump a little. "I have no idea." He said, waving his hand dismissively.

“Maybe he went to the bathroom...” Adam started but was cut off by a hiss from Will, sucking air in through his teeth before laughing it back out and pinching his fingers to the top of his nose.

“Whatever.” He replied so sharply that it shocked Adam. “Come on Alana...” He grabbed the girl’s hand and headed out the nearest door.

Adam felt a bit shaken and was glad when Nigel appeared beside him and snaked an arm around him.

“Baby what’s wrong. Why are you tense?”

“Um... Will. He snapped at me.” Adam felt a lump rise in his throat. He and Will had patched up their little difference of opinion on Nigel, and though Will was still standoffish with the Romanian, he accepted their relationship. And they had become pretty close again, which Adam was glad of - he counted Will as a close friend. “I think he’s still sick. Something is definitely wrong with him. I’m worried.”

“You want me to go see if he’s ok?” Nigel asked, stroking his hand up and down Adam’s arm.

“No... I’ll go check on him. Maybe you can see if you can find Hannibal, just in case Will needs to go home. I think he might be in the bathroom.”

Nigel nodded and headed off back the way he had come. Adam went through the doors Will had left through. He didn’t immediately see Will in the corridor so he walked along until it branched off. Right went outside and left would eventually lead back around to the toilets, so Adam chose that direction, thinking that Will might have gone towards the bathrooms looking for Hannibal.

He rounded the next corner and found Nigel coming towards him.

“Did you find Hannibal?”

“No, not in the bathroom. Maybe he’s getting some punch or something. Will?”

Adam shook his head. “He must have gone a different way.” He frowned.

“He’ll be ok I’m sure. You want to dance some more? They’re probably in there right now.” Nigel smiled reassuringly.

Adam nodded. “Ok, but when we see Hannibal I think we should tell him to take Will home. He’s really still not well. Must be some sort of flu.”

Nigel slipped his arm around Adam and they were about to head back to the main hall when there was a noise. Both stopped and stared at the classroom door - slightly ajar. A moan. Adam’s immediate thought was that Will was unwell and maybe had gone to the classroom to

rest. Was he moaning in pain? Adam stepped forward but Nigel stopped him before he reached the door.

“No, Adam... I think he’s... Um... Will’s ok.”

Adam wasn’t sure what he meant until he heard another moan and this time could hear it was the types of moan that he made with Nigel. He blushed and ducked his head, a little embarrassed to hear Will’s pleasure.

“He... uh... must have found Hannibal.” Adam stammered.

Nigel nodded with a grin and started to steer them passed the door. “Holy shit.” Suddenly, from Nigel.

“What?” Adam asked, startled as Nigel continued on with him.

“Nothing... I... I could see as we walked passed - through the crack in the door... It isn’t Hannibal in there. Will is with a girl.” Nigel actually looked shocked, which was something Adam was sure didn’t happen often.

“Alana?” Adam asked no one in particular. “Why would he... Maybe he’s so sick he doesn’t know what he’s doing. We should - “

“- do nothing. It isn’t our business Adam.” Nigel’s tone was tinged with regret.

“But... Hannibal. If Will is so sick he doesn’t know what he’s doing... but Hannibal will be so hurt, and Will. I don’t want that for them.” Adam had stopped and Nigel stopped next to him.

“I think it’s a bad idea Adam. It really isn’t our business.”

“He’s my cousin and friend. I don’t want him to do something he might regret.” Adam reasoned, determined.

Nigel smiled and seemed to relax a little. “You’re a good friend to want to walk in on someone getting it on.”

Adam returned the smile and headed back to the classroom. He took a breath before pushing the door open and clearing his throat so that they knew he was there. Will and Alana were pressed against the wall next to the door - they were kissing, Will’s hand was on Alana’s breast, still covered with her dress though he could see it had been unzipped at the back. Alana’s hand was down Will’s undone pants, stroking.

Adam gasped and then the breath caught in his throat. Finally this seemed to get him noticed and Will looked up.

“Shit... Adam, what the fuck? What are you doing?” Will started trying to do up his pants as Alana pulled away from him a blush visible across both their faces even in the dim light.

“Will... are you ok? I think you’re sick. You need to go home...” Adam managed not to stammer the words out.

“Fuck off Adam.” Will snapped.

Adam physically jumped back. And then Nigel was at his back. He’d waited the other side of the door but now was there and narrowing in on Will.

“What the fuck is your problem Graham?” He growled. They had reached a generally easy truce in the last couple of months, but Adam knew Nigel was upset with the way Will had treated Adam when he first met Nigel and he wasn’t happy to put up with it in future. Even so, Adam grabbed Nigel’s arm and stopped him from reaching Will.

“I’m going to... go” Alana was zipping up her dress as she indicated the door and then pushed passed them and away.

“Will... what about Hannibal.” Adam practically squeaked the words, his throat now tight with emotion.

Will started laughing. And laughing, and laughing. Laughing so hard he allowed himself to slip down the wall until he sat on the floor. And then he was crying and his head was in his hands and Adam didn’t understand what was happening. He froze to the spot. Nigel squeezed his shoulders and then moved over to Will. Placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Are you ok Will?” Nigel asked gently.

Will shook his head and then leaned forward into Nigel. Nigel for his part looked a little surprised but then hugged Will to him as the boy sobbed. Adam took a breath and moved forward crouching beside them he placed a hand on Will’s back.

“Are you sick Will?” He asked quietly.

“He’s drunk, Adam.” Nigel replied in little more than a whisper. “What’s going on Will. You want us to take you home?”

Will nodded against Nigel’s chest and then pulled back to look at them both. “Hannibal... he...” More tears he couldn’t hold back. He sucked in a breath and steadied himself. “We’re not together any more.”

Adam and Nigel looked at each other for a quick moment. Adam was confused, how could they not be together. That didn’t make any sense at all. He opened his mouth to say something and then stopped, not wanting to say or ask anything that might upset Will.

Will sat back from them both now and buried his head in his hands. His words came out muffled as a result - “I just wanted to forget... I can... All I can think of is his hands on me and I just wanted to forget.”

Adam felt a stab of sadness for his cousin and shuffled close, snuggled up to Will’s side and slipped his arms around him. “It’ll be ok.” He whispered.

“I’ll go bring the car around.” Nigel said softly, leaving the cousins huddled together.

*

Hannibal looked at the clock and wondered what Will was doing. Was he at the dance? Did he stay home?

He was sat in the study, hiding perhaps. He had spent most of the last couple of days hiding when he wasn’t at school. He would get home and head for the study or the conservatory - going to his room was too obvious and he’d be too easily found and forced to spend time getting to know Bedelia.

Although his mother was quiet on the subject, an air of sadness about her, his father was the opposite. He was determined that Hannibal make Bedelia happy, he didn’t want her family to have any cause to rescind the deal. They didn’t have the money available - it was tied up in the castle and land back in Lithuania. If the Du Marier’s requested the return of the money they would in effect own the Count’s titled land and the castle built by his ancestors. That was what his happiness was worth, Hannibal mused. What he was worth to his family.

He pulled books from his bag, thinking he might attempt homework, though so far that had been impossible since the last time he saw Will. A flash of images then - Will over him - images from their first time together after Homecoming mixed up with the last time they were together at Will’s house. A mix of tender love and heated hatred. Hannibal tried to shake the image away.

He wasn’t sure how long he’d been sat there when Mischa opened the door, followed closely by Bedelia. An apology writ large on his sister’s face. Their parents must have asked her to help Bedelia find him.

“Hann, um...”

Hannibal smiled at Mischa and nodded - she didn’t need to say anything, he didn’t blame her. Mischa returned the smile and headed back passed Bedelia and out of the study.

Bedelia watched her go and then turned to Hannibal. “I’m starting to think you’re trying to avoid me.”

Almost succeeding - he wanted to reply but bit his tongue against the rudeness.

“Hannibal.” An exasperated note to her voice. “I understand that you may dislike me. I won’t insult you by asking you to try and get to know me. It hardly matters does it?” A pause, but Hannibal didn’t think a reply was necessary. “But I do ask that you try to learn tolerance at least. Otherwise this is going to get quite tedious for the both of us.”

Hannibal could only reply with a sigh as he sat back in the chair.

“I’ll come to my point. I understand from my parents that you had formed an attachment with some boy.” She paused and he couldn’t help but give a reaction - his jaw tightening at her words. The grin this brought forth from her was quite cruel. “I see it is true then. Hannibal I

am willing to offer a deal for you.” She walked over and perched on the edge of the ornate desk. “If you wish, you can have your boy on the side, as long as you’re discreet of course. In return I would ask that you defer to me in all things. We will be staying at the castle when we return to Lithuania, but after that I wish to come to America and explore it further. And so we shall, and I will choose where, the house, the staff. And of course I would need some restrictions on your boy - it’s not as though he could live and travel with us.” She laughed lightly. “I think it quite a fair deal.” She smiled. The cat who got the cream.

Hannibal stood and started from the room.

“Are you not going to give me your answer, Hannibal?”

He stopped and sighed before turning to her. “Miss Du Maurier, my *boy*, as you put it, has my deepest affection and respect. There is no possible way I would install him in such a degrading position.” Little more than a prostitute, he would be as enslaved as Hannibal. All for one family’s greed for a title, and another’s covetousness of wealth. “You will have to find some other way to exercise over me the total control that you seek.”

He noted her grin. For her this was a game and she obviously had more tricks up her sleeve. He turned on his heel and left the room.

“Mischa?” His sister looked stricken as he found her just beyond the door.

“Hannibal, I don’t understand. Why does she want to hurt you and Will?” The tears in her eyes caused a stab of pain in his heart.

“Come dearest, not here...” He lead her away from the study and back towards her room.

*

Will groaned as he woke. His head thumping.

He felt the warmth of a body next to him and for the slightest of moments his heart skipped a beat. And then the night before came flooding back to him. He sat up and looked over. Adam was at an awkward angle on top of the covers, a book next to him - he must have fallen asleep whilst sitting on Will’s bed reading. Nigel was slumped, also sleeping, in the beat up old armchair in the corner of the room.

He eased himself from the bed and into the bathroom, only returning once he had emptied his painfully full bladder. Adam was awake then and on Will’s phone.

“... oh, no he’s back now. Do you want... ok, here he is.” He put his hand over the receiver and held the phone out to Will. “It’s Hannibal’s sister, she just called so I picked up...”

Will swallowed, his heart heavy as he nodded and took the phone.

“Mischa?”

“Will... I...” a sob from the girl made Will’s throat tighten. “I didn’t know what my parents had planned with Bedelia... What Hann...” That was her name then.

“Mischa honey, don’t cry... Hannibal has to do the right thing...” He found himself suddenly in the odd position of wanting to defend Hannibal to his sister.

“The right thing is being with you Will!” Angry tone now. Eight year old indignation.

“He has to do this, Mischa.” He found himself saying.

“No... It’s not fair. He loves you, you love him. I hate this!” A pause and a gasp for air.

“Hannibal explained everything... I’d rather be poor than for Hannibal to have to marry her.” Will found himself smiling at that, such a sweet child. “I’m going to tell my parents that!”

“Mischa...” he sighed. “It doesn’t really matter what you say. The situation is unchangeable. And even if Hannibal didn’t marry her, I’m not sure Hannibal and I can go back to how things were. I’m sorry honey. I...” His throat closed off and he choked out a sob. He couldn’t do this. He pressed end on the call and looked up to see both Adam and Nigel now awake and looking at him.

*

Hannibal could hear the shouting from the end of the hall but it took him until he reached the door to realise it was his father and Mischa. A chill ran through him. They never fought, and even if Mischa had ever done anything wrong, his father would never have raised his voice to her. Not as he was in that moment.

Hannibal opened the door and all went quiet for a moment.

“Did you put her up to this?” the Count angrily asked of Hannibal and then turned back to Mischa when he received a confused expression. “It is not your place to question your parents-”

“It’s my future! I don’t want it.” Mischa was angry, her face was red but she wasn’t close to tears, she was coldly determined.

Hannibal stood rooted to the spot and slightly shocked by what he had walked in on. Was Mischa really admonishing their father? By virtue of the schooling she had received and the general intelligence they had both been blessed with, she was older than her 8 years and, it appeared, quite formidable.

“Young lady...”

“No father! I will not allow you to use me as an excuse in this. Hannibal must marry Bedelia or they will need to be paid back with lands that we do not use and a castle we do not live in. And a fortune we do not need.” She was raising her voice but not quite shouting. “I won’t be part of it. I refuse. I don’t want any of it. If it means Hannibal’s happiness! If you are happy to sell his happiness, to sell him - because that is what you’re doing no matter what else you have convinced yourself of - then I do not want any gain from it. If you feel these things are more important than your son then that is on you, but my brother and his happiness is worth a fortune to me.”

There was silence for a moment. All the more deafening for the cessation of the loud voices. The Count's face creased in pain as he looked between a determined Mischa and a resigned Hannibal.

Free To Run

Chapter Summary

There are a lot of decisions ahead for the Lecter family. And Will has to decide whether or not to stop Hannibal leaving town.

Chapter Notes

When I started this installment I just thought "ohhhh, I wonder what would happen if Hannibal was betrothed to Bedelia in an arranged marriage!?!?" and for some reason didn't consider that that might get... angsty. This is possibly the most angst I have ever written and early on I thought I might have written myself into a corner. But here we are at the end and the eventual happy ending. Thanks for sticking with it!! :D <3

“Mr Du Maurier, an unexpected pleasure...” The Count greeted as the man was shown through to the study where he and Hannibal had been sitting.

“Hardly!” Spat the man. “You surely can’t imagine that I would have taken no action after receiving the call from your lawyers and my daughter on the next plane home? Indeed I have come in person to see if we can resolve this folly as men.”

The Count, a diplomat of many years and charming to the last, smiled and nodded. “Of course. If you do not have other arrangements you are more than welcome to stay in our guest wing.”

“I hope not to stay that long Count.” The title said with disdain. “I believe this is something easily remedied - I can send for my daughter and we will have no delay in this wedding. This is enough stalling.”

“Stalling? Mr Du Maurier, I am sure my lawyers informed you that the marriage is not going to take place. I apologise for the inconvenience but we have decided instead to return the money your family was so kind as to loan us.” The Count walked to his desk and picked up a dossier. “You will find details in here... of course we have accounted for inflation and interest.”

“This is absurd! There was never a deal to return the money. We don’t need the money, we want the title. You’re son is going to marry my daughter.” The man’s face, already ruddy, was heating through several shades of red.

Hannibal stood silent the whole time. Poised politely behind the desk, hands clasped behind his back and head held high.

Almost two weeks had passed since Mischa had confronted their father. Shortly after Hannibal had arrived in the study, their mother had also joined them. Within minutes the Countess was a weeping mess. She clutched hold of Hannibal and turned to her husband. "You are not selling my son." She snapped the words out much to the surprise of all. Evidently she had decided that the agreement with the Du Maurier family did not sit well with her now that the reality of it had sunk in - that it was costing her son's happiness and freedom. Hannibal had taken his mother's hand and squeezed it.

There was then talking and shouting and crying for hours. None of this from Hannibal who remained still and quiet as the rest of his family argued over his fate -

"It's not that I wish this for Hannibal but the deal was stuck and there is no other choice." His father's words weren't all that convincing when he said he did not wish it - if anything he sounded completely unmoved by the whole situation.

Mischa and his mother had argued in his favour, and it was only their onslaught and threats - the final one being that the Countess would be left no choice but to leave and take the children with her for Hannibal's protection - that seemed to bring the Count to his senses. He started to really consider what he was doing. What he was asking of Hannibal. Though Hannibal suspected that he just wanted to avoid the embarrassment of a family breakup, and worse yet, it being made public in the press.

"You do not wish it." It wasn't really a question.

Hannibal spoke for the first time in hours. "I wish for nothing." He was resigned. "This arrangement has broken my heart, it has torn me from the person I love most in this world and now it tears my family apart. I do whatever it is you wish, I have never been asked what I wish and it is too late now to consider that." He thought of Will - how he would likely never forgive Hannibal, certainly never wish to be with him again even if the marriage was called off. So what was the point. If he could not be happy then why not at least make his family happy. "Though I thank my mother and sister for their concern, I will marry Miss Du Maurier as arranged. There are no other options left to me now."

"No Hann!" Mischa cried. "I won't let you do this."

His mother came to him and pulled him into an embrace that he found he returned eagerly, as he might of as a young boy. "I will not allow you." Said quietly but heard by all. "Your happiness means everything to me."

Hannibal felt his chest heave and silent tears roll down his cheeks. He was exhausted by this. He wished he could disappear into nothing. He pulled himself together for a moment and spoke into his mother's hair, though loud enough for all to hear -

"If I could have wished for anything, before we came to this, it would have been for Will. I would have wished for nothing more than to spend my life making him as happy as he made me." A breath to soothe the constricting pain in his throat. "But that will never happen now."

My relationship with Will has become irreparable, so it no longer matters. You may do what you wish with me.”

Perhaps he had finally realised his son’s pain, but the Count now let out a slight and barely audible sound of anguish. He moved to Hannibal, still in his mother’s arms, and rested a hand on his back.

“We will be ruined.” The Count said. Hannibal tensed under his hand. “But... how can I... I have been blind so many years to the pain this might cause. We are not living in the age we once were.”

Hannibal knew that although his parent’s marriage was not arranged, they had essentially chosen each other from a pool of potential appropriate options from the society within which the families moved. Not that they hadn’t found happiness, but not all of their peers were as lucky.

Silence continued for many minutes as his father moved to the desk and began making notes. Mischa, who had alternated between sitting on an overstuffed sofa, and standing in indignation, was now curled up on the sofa fighting sleep. The Countess stepped back and out of the embrace, leading Hannibal by the hand to the two matching armchairs facing the sofa, and sat them down in respective chairs - hands still clasped across the space between.

After what seemed like many hours but was barely twenty minutes, the Count looked up.

“We could keep this house. We would need to lose the staff, perhaps my salary at the embassy would be enough to keep a small handful, less if we hope to put the children through college. The castle, the land, all the fealty payments therein... everything we own in Lithuania, would have to go to the Du Mauriers.” He looked stricken and Hannibal wondered if he would decide, on weighing it up, that it was worth selling Hannibal for.

Quietly his mother spoke, a gentle smile for her husband - “Would you not gladly lose everything for our son? He, and Mischa, are our future - the Lecters of the future, what need do we have of the Lecters of the past? Of their cold corridors and swampy fields. I think we would be much better served by investing in our children rather than ancestors long dead.”

Hannibal knew, in fact they all knew, from the look on the Count’s face - a sort of resignation - that Hannibal would no longer be marrying Bedelia Du Maurier. Hannibal was strangely bereft - he knew how much their ancestral home and lands meant to his father, they meant almost as much to him. Losing them felt like losing part of themselves, and yet it was no choice at all really. He would lose them over Will any day. It was just heartbreaking that this had come too late and now he had lost them both.

That thought had returned to him time and again over the days since that night in the study - almost the exact spots where they all stood now. And he knew, again, that he might as well have allowed it to go ahead now that he no longer had Will any way. His father had seen to Bedelia being sent on a flight back to Lithuania the morning after the discussion in the study, his lawyers calling ahead. And all the time, whilst Hannibal knew it was stupid for them to lose everything after he had already lost Will, he could not bring himself to offer the marriage

once again. He would keep his freedom, though he wasn't sure, on balance, that he deserved it.

He had spent his days and nights thinking of Will.

"You have my family seat sir, the fortune tied to it, I can give you no more." The Count was polite.

"It's the title we want man!" Du Maurier raged. Hannibal wondered if he might have a heart attack.

"Neither of my children are for sale, so that would be quite impossible."

"It was not impossible fifteen years ago when the deal was struck! I will not stand for this. My lawyers-"

"- Will do nothing." The Count smiled amicably. "This arrangement was between gentlemen, not a legally binding contract. Such a contract would be tantamount to slavery sir, and that is not legal here or in Lithuania as far as I am aware." The Count held up his hand as Du Maurier went to object. "And as noted it was a gentleman's agreement, and as I no longer have land and you do not have a title, I would be hard pushed to see either of us as gentlemen." the briefest of pauses and then - "Now, if you wish to discuss this further, I am more than happy to oblige, but please know that there will be no other resolution than that which has been settled - our debt to your family has been repaid, accept it with good grace."

Du Maurier was puffed up, red. He looked like he might say something but instead turned on his heel and marched from the room.

There was silence between the two Lecters as the Count resumed his seat behind his desk. He busied himself and didn't look up but said -

"I am sorry Hannibal. When these arrangements were made we... I didn't think to the consequences."

"Yes father." Hannibal acknowledged for what seemed like the hundredth time. His days were spent between apologies from his father and being urged to eat something by his mother. He ignored completely the requests from Mischa that he go and see Will. He would not impose himself on his love, it was not his place to intrude after what he had done.

The Count looked up to where his son stood and looked pained. "Are you sure of this Hannibal?"

Hannibal nodded. "I don't... I can't be here right now." He wanted to be away from his father, perhaps one day he could forgive him. He wanted to be away from Will. It hurt too much to know he could be at his house in under an hour, to his school in less, and not all that much further to the hotel they had stayed in the first time they made love and the first morning they had awoken in each other's arms. "I can defer my entry to John Hopkins, which seems for the best now we may not afford the fees." resignation but no malice there - wasn't it a small price to pay?

“Perhaps Paris will be good for you. Your uncle and his wife will no doubt enjoy your company.” The Count forced a smile. He didn’t want Hannibal to leave but Hannibal wasn’t sure he cared about that. Or much about anything. His father cleared his throat - “For what it’s worth, I liked Will. A sensible boy, with intelligence, integrity... he suited you well.”

Hannibal wanted to be sick. *Not that it matters now.* He turned and left the study without another word.

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Will woke late. It was the weekend. There was no need to get up early and even the lure of a fishing trip with his dad fell flat these days. At least he had stopped missing school - it was too painful to be in his own head all the time and school was a welcome distraction.

Adam and Nigel had taken to seeing him most nights. Either coming over and hanging out or taking him out somewhere. They were gentle with him, pretty much ignored he was there unless he chose to join in conversation, and yet he was never made to feel like the third wheel on a date. The way Nigel looked at Adam broke his heart over and over. But he was happy for them, he was even starting to like Nigel - and had to at least admit that he treated Adam so well it hurt. He couldn’t imagine anyone so bizarrely right for Adam. He hoped every day that they would always be together and Adam would never feel the pain he felt.

“Will, um...you have visitors.” His dad shouted. “Are you up? Get up!” There was a weird edge to his father’s tone. Maybe he was getting sick of Adam and Nigel dropping around and eating half the contents of his fridge every night. He hadn’t specifically made plans with them so it would be interesting to see what they had come up with to occupy the freezing Saturday lunchtime. “Will!” His father’s shout was now almost panicked. *Way to overreact dad!*

Will pretty much rolled out of bed, pulled on some sweatpants and a t-shirt that had seen better days, and headed towards the front door. His dad was already outside, the door open. Had he gone out to warn them to stop eating the anchovies - they were his bait fish not pizza toppings! Will chuckled at how mad it was driving his dad and was pretty sure that was the only reason Nigel kept doing it. Or maybe he did it to make Will and Adam smile. It worked either way.

Will stepped out onto the porch and wrapped his arms around himself against the biting cold. He had been about to tell his dad to leave off them when he realised it wasn’t Nigel and Adam at all. His dad was emphatically shaking the hand of a tall, well dressed man with slightly angular features. Hannibal’s dad, the Count. He could see Mischa standing next to him, and now they were both being ushered to the house by his father.

Will swallowed down bile and retreated back inside. He saw his boots by the door and considered pulling them and a coat on and disappearing through the back. He couldn’t see them, it was almost as painful as seeing Hannibal. What did they even want? He thought about Mischa and how sweet she was to him and how he missed her too, but it didn’t matter. He began pulling on his boots but it was too late, they were coming through the door.

“Will... Count Lecter has come to see you.” His dad spoke awkwardly - formalities didn’t suit him. Will cringed inwardly, how did he ever think it would have worked with Hannibal anyway? Their families were so different.

“Will.” A delighted yell from Mischa as she ran straight to him and wrapped her arms around him, her head at chest height, rested there. “I’ve missed you. My new babysitter is horrible!”

New? Why wasn’t Hannibal babysitting her? Had he already gone back to Lithuania? Was he already married? Will felt the bile rise again and his eyes sting at the corners.

“Will.” The Count greeted and held out his hand, which Will felt obliged to shake. “Is there somewhere we can talk?”

“The sitting room.” Will’s dad urged when Will remained silent, unable to form words. Everything hurt. “I’ll bring through some refreshments.” his dad added.

“Mischa, will you help Mr Graham?” The Count asked though it obviously wasn’t a request. But Mischa beamed a smile and nodded. The two pairs went their separate ways.

In the sitting room the Count sat in their beat up old sofa, Will moved to stand by the window. Before the Count could say anything, and to be fair Will was at a loss as to why the man was here at all, Will blurted -

“I didn’t know he was already engaged. If I’d known...” What? He wasn’t sure. He was sure that he had started to fall in love with Hannibal Lecter from their first meeting. How would he have reacted? At what point would it not have hurt? Maybe if he had told Will within the first five minutes of their meeting? Anything after that would still have resulted in a small degree of pain and regret no matter how slight.

“I know.” The Count replied with a look of comfort. Perhaps even regret. “I’m sorry that his not telling you caused so much pain, to you both. But I hope you can understand his reasons as I do. It has taken me a while to understand his feelings on all of this. Too long.”

“I... I don’t understand why you are here.” Will interjected. He didn’t want to seem rude but neither did he want to spend time with his ex-boyfriend’s father after said father had forced said ex into an arranged marriage.

“I wanted to apologise to you personally for my part in this situation. It has taken me too long to see the pain this has all caused. I hope you will accept my apology for that.”

Will felt his face burning, anger coursing through him. Was this guy serious. “No Count Lecter, I don’t think I can accept your apology.” He spat the words, not caring for rudeness now.

The Count, for his part, did not look in the least angry or offended, he only gave a sharp nod of acknowledgement. “I understand.” He stood and Will thought he was going to leave but instead he came to Will and put a hand on his shoulder. “Will, I can ask nothing of you, much less forgiveness, but I had hoped you might forgive Hannibal. He leaves in a few hours and

Mischa urged me to come and see you. You have time to catch him, if you could find your way to forgive him, at the least. Nothing more if that is all you can offer.”

Will was somewhere between confused and nauseous. Did the count really expect him to go running to the airport and accept Hannibal’s apology and then wave him and his future wife off on their flight and send best wishes to the happy couple?

“I’m not sure Hannibal would want that any more than I do.” Will replied quietly, lowering his eyes to the floor.

The Count looked as though he was about to say something further but the door opened, admitting Mr Graham and Mischa with tea trays.

It broke Will’s heart a little to admit, but Mischa looked so happy. Was she so pleased at the match made for her brother? Perhaps she’d always hoped for a sister and got on famously with the young woman. That hit Will like a pain through his gut.

“Will... are you going to go see Hannibal?” She asked brightly. He saw the Count shake his head out of the corner of his eye and her face fell. She quietly took a seat and began setting mugs out ready for the coffee. A small and delicate “oh.” was her only verbal response.

Will took a seat opposite her and felt bad for any pain he might be causing her. “Are you... Um, are you going to be a bridesmaid?” He asked as his dad started pouring out coffees.

She looked at him with a confused expression, which faded into realisation. “He didn’t...Hannibal hasn’t talked to you has he?”

“He wrote me a letter and explained everything.”

“That’s not... He didn’t write about the marriage? About it being off?”

“What? No.” Will felt like his blood had turned to ice in his veins.

“I thought...” Mischa looked confused. “He never outright said it, but when we spoke I thought he had let you know. I asked him to let you know.” She looked angry now.

“Can I ask what’s going on?” This from his dad who clearly could see the look of anguish on Will’s face.

“My son’s engagement came to an end, other arrangements were made.” The Count explained in short. “Mischa believed that he had let Will know of this and had heard nothing in return -” He turned to Will “Which we would totally understand.” Then back to both he and his dad “But Hannibal is leaving today and I had hoped that my own apology might tip the balance in having Will talk with Hannibal.”

“Don’t let him leave Will!” Mischa pleaded.

“Mischa.” Admonishment from her father. “If Hannibal wishes to leave then we cannot stop him. It is true we would prefer him to stay but that is not why I’m here. I’m not asking you to convince him to stay, I am asking that you both make your peace with each other. At the least

you might be able to part as friends.” There was something in the Count’s face - regret, guilt? Whatever the emotion it was clear that this was his way to, at least in part, absolve himself.

Will’s head was spinning. “I don’t... I don’t understand. Hannibal is going to Lithuania -”

Mischa interrupted. “No, he’s going to Paris to stay with our uncle Robert. He needed a break after everything that happened.”

Will’s stomach dropped. There were so many emotions coursing through him that he thought he might be sick. “I can’t...I can’t deal with this. Please, can you leave... I can’t...” Will stood and walked from the room.

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Adam sat in the passenger seat with some coupons in his hand, flicking through them and then reading one aloud to Nigel, adding - “I think they are only valid one per lane not per person.” He waved the one for the bowling alley.

“We can do something else if it’s too expensive.” Nigel offered. It wasn’t like any of them had a lot of cash - Nigel’s parents were comfortable enough, the club doing well, but they tended to have him make his own way in the world so they weren’t quite the bank of mum and dad. Mr Raki had a good job but being a single parent meant things were always a little tight, same with Will and his dad.

Nigel was happy to do pretty much anything, but Adam was convinced that the things they did had to be elaborate enough to take Will’s mind off of Hannibal. Nothing so far had worked, including the zoo which had cost a fucking fortune. So today was bowling, though they’d probably have to talk Will into it- he was often resistant. But Nigel agreed with Adam, it wasn’t good for him to wallow in it all.

After the Winter Formal, the breakup became public knowledge - Alana had spread it around at school along with her hopes that she and Will might get back together.

From what Nigel could tell, she was quite a popular girl and Will had been strangely acceptable to the popular kids because he was so ridiculously pretty - family trait, he grinned thinking of Adam. Will had been a quirk and he and Alana had dated a couple of months before Will realised it wasn’t really working out - she just wanted the pretty boy without all the baggage, like the abandonment issues from when his mum left, his sometimes crippling social anxiety which only Adam could really understand, his need for space and time alone. Will had explained this to them when Adam had been a little vexed the day after the dance by seeing Will with Alana.

Will having now dated the son of a Count seemed to have also raised his stock, and several people had shown an interest once he had returned to school the Monday after the dance. He’d ignored them all with the exception of Alana who he apologised to and gently rebuffed.

Mr Graham had been amazing throughout the whole thing and really helped hold Will together. He knew what it was like to lose the love of his life after all, not that Nigel would

ever pry as to what had actually happened with Will's mum. He wasn't sure Adam even knew the details.

They finally arrived at Will's and Nigel was sure he saw a Bentley pull out from further up the street before he pulled the car up and parked. Had Hannibal come by? It seemed unlikely from what Will had told them. Although Will didn't divulge all the contents, the letter he said Hannibal had sent was clearly meant to be their final communication. And he'd be getting married any day now, visiting his ex might be a bit odd.

Nigel felt kind of bad for Hannibal. He was team Will all the way, but Hannibal was clearly under pressure from his family. Nigel knew what that was like and was pretty sure he didn't have it half as bad as Hannibal. He had been diplomatic enough to not say that in front of Will.

When they got in the house Mr Graham looked stressed and a little washed out. "Oh boys!" He greeted them and then started to relay the meeting that had just taken place.

When they got to his room, Will was laid out on his bed with his face planted in his pillow. Adam went immediately to his side and sat on the bed, taking hold of Will's hand. He saw Will squeeze back.

"What are you going to do?" Nigel asked. Will, still face planted, shrugged.

Adam, who appeared to still be processing the whole situation, looked thoughtful. "Hannibal isn't getting married." He knew Adam had found this really difficult to process when Will had finally revealed everything to them the day after the dance. He couldn't understand what was going on - why Hannibal would suddenly be marrying someone other than Will. It had hurt him and that made it so much harder for him to grasp.

Will finally pulled back and sat up on the bed. "He's going to Paris." was all Will offered.

"You should go stop him. Tell him you love him." Adam said ardently, eyes sparkling.

"Adam." a humouring tone "he kept something very big from me and broke my trust. He really hurt me, I don't think I can go after him."

"But you love him." Adam was confused again.

"I do." Will admitted, choking back a few tears. "But-"

Adam interrupted "-it wasn't his fault he hurt you, his family were forcing him...."

It went on from there like a game of tennis. Nigel watched the two cousins bat arguments between them as to why Will should or should not go and see Hannibal before he left, possibly even stop him from leaving.

"-Besides, perhaps he wants a fresh start in France. Perhaps that's what we both need."

Adam looked fit to burst, was it anger or frustration? Finally he snapped "Will, get in the car this instant we are driving you to the airport" Both Will and Nigel were a little stunned, and

yet Will started to move.

*

Hannibal had declined his father's offer to drive him to the airport and instead had been driven by the chauffeur that they would likely not be able to afford in a month. This seemed no hardship to anyone except his father who was still struggling with the idea of living only on his income rather than the family wealth. It had been a quick and simple thing to transfer over the castle and lands. Knowing their stay in America could be several years, they had brought many furnishings and items of sentimental value from the castle when they had moved. Even so, he knew his father was sad to have given over the castle with the entire remaining contents - family heirlooms all, and art worth a small fortune in itself. His mother had insisted it was a small price to pay to save their son, and sometimes he thought his father might share the opinion. Not always.

It wasn't that his father was a bad person, he was of a different generation and had been facing ruin when he made the arrangement. Was he a bad father? Perhaps. Regardless of anything else, Hannibal found himself unable to be around his father. He did not hate the man but he could not ignore the pain he had caused. He could not see the pain in Mischa's face over the whole thing and her want for him to reunite with Will. He could not live with Will so close and yet so far.

Cruelly perhaps, he had allowed Mischa to believe that he had informed Will of the change in circumstances. She had asked and asked and he stopped replying in the negative rather than truly telling her he had. But he needed her to stop. He couldn't hear about Will any longer and his flight couldn't come soon enough.

In his eagerness to leave, Hannibal had arrived at the airport earlier than necessary. He decided to sit and have a coffee, look over the email from his uncle regarding how to reach him once the plane landed. Maybe he'd even start on the book he'd brought for the flight, though knew realistically that was ridiculous. He hadn't read anything since he last saw Will, didn't have the concentration necessary to bring his mind from Will long enough to focus on a book. He had drawn though. From memory, sketches and sketches of Will, of the little cabin in Wolf Trap, of the hotel after Homecoming, of the park they met in. His sketch pad was a historical document plotting their lives together. Instinctively, Hannibal put his hand over his breast pocket, thinking of the nude sketch that lay within.

From experience, Hannibal knew that the best place for coffee - less busy and more cosy - was the little shop in the main building. It was before the check-in desks, and wasn't ever as hectic as those in the departure lounge. Looking at the boards he could see quite how early he was, his flight wouldn't be available for check in for sometime. He got a coffee and took a seat directly facing one of the digital update boards so that he could see when he had to head through to departures. He stared at the board but let his thoughts drift.

He wasn't sure how long he'd been lost in thought, paying no attention to the flight information at all, but it was long enough for his check-in desk to open and now be flashing on the screen that it would be closing shortly. Grabbing his luggage he moved swiftly towards the desk.

There was a small queue, which was surprising - odd that so many people were cutting it as fine. He looked passed them to see the two staff at the desk looking rather put upon. There was some kind of hold up - three people stood at the desk.

“I’m sorry, but I am not going to repeat this again. We cannot let you through to departures without a ticket, we cannot give you information on passengers who may or may not be on this flight, there is nothing we can do to help you and I’d appreciate if you calmed down.”

“I am very fucking calm!” A deep, rough voice with a Romanian accent. *Not Nigel, surely?* Hannibal moved out of the line and started forward slightly to get a better look, the coincidence would be baffling. But yes, there he was, leaning - not menacingly but imposing - over the desk, now speaking in low tones with the woman who had just spoken. Next to him two slight figures, both with curly hair, both pale. Adam, he realised. But then, they could almost both be Adam.

“You don’t understand!” Definitely Adam’s voice. “It’s really important...”

“Please. Let’s just go...” The third person sounded exhausted and Hannibal sympathised.

And then that one, who wasn’t quite Adam, turned. And suddenly they were looking at each other as his companions continued talking to the staff. And Hannibal’s heart stopped.

“Will?” He breathed the word, no one could have heard it. It could almost be Will. He was thinner, skinny like Adam but an unhealthy size on the slightly bigger frame. His skin wasn’t just pale, it was palid, with the exception of dark circles around sunken eyes. Hannibal felt a stab in his heart. Could it be Will? His eyes were the same colour but lacked the brightness of Will’s.

They, neither of them, moved nor turned away. And then Adam was looking at Will and then following his line of sight to Hannibal. A smile then spreading over his face.

“Hannibal! Nigel look, it’s Hannibal... we found him!” Adam was moving forward now. Nigel leaving a few quiet parting words with the staff, who now looked rather affronted, but Will still stood frozen. And Hannibal wanted to go to him. He wanted it so badly. Had he done that to him? When was the last time he ate properly or slept? Perhaps the same time as Hannibal.

“Fuck, he looks as bad as Will.” He heard Nigel. Saw Adam’s concerned face.

Yes, he probably did. He hadn’t eaten or slept properly since the last time he saw Will. He’d only showered and dressed daily because otherwise his father would have had the staff bathe him.

It was only as they neared him that Nigel and Adam realised Will hadn’t followed. Adam turned -

“Will, we found him.” Adam smiled.

And then Will was moving, as though the words had woken him up. He turned, moved quickly. Heading for the exit.

“Fuck!” He heard Nigel say, but nothing else because they were soon out of earshot as he took off after Will. He wasn’t sure why. He had made up his mind to leave Will be, he’d already caused him enough pain. He had decided not to make contact and certainly not to see him in person because, as now was proven, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to stop himself.

“Will please.” Hannibal caught up with him and touched his arm lightly, didn’t dare take hold of it. “At the least... let me say goodbye.”

Will stopped but did not turn. His breath was heaving, but the exertion alone couldn’t have caused that. Was he crying?

Will didn’t turn but after a long inhale and stilted exhale, he spoke - “You... you didn’t tell me things had changed. Your father and Mischa came and saw me...” a sharp sob seemed to escape. “Do you know how... embarrassing... hurtful...” Another exhale. “I can’t believe, after everything, you wouldn’t just let me know... so that I could handle this, so that when people start telling me about it, I don’t feel like I’m the last to know- like I never meant any-fucking-thing to you.”

“Will...” Hannibal’s voice barely above a whisper. “You know that isn’t true... you meant... you mean everything to me.” He paused, unable to see how he could make any of this better. He really did need to leave, not just because he was on the verge of missing his flight, but for Will’s sake. He needed to stop all this pain he was causing and get out of Will’s life - let him heal. He reached out and gently squeezed Will’s hand. “It doesn’t really matter what I say, but I love you, I am so deeply sorry, and I... I wish you so much happiness.” He let Will’s hand drop and went to walk back to check in.

And then Will turned and caught his hand. “You’re not going to fucking walk away from me Hannibal. You owe me that much at least.”

Hannibal stopped, he couldn’t argue with that, but he was also shocked now to see Will up close. He couldn’t help reach out his hand, he cupped Will’s cheek.

“Did I do this to you?” His heartbreak was clear in his broken voice.

Will, perhaps an involuntary action for it seemed to surprise himself as much as Hannibal, leaned into the hand, eyes closing. And Hannibal knew the feeling - he had missed the touch of Will so much it had become a physical pain.

“Can I hold you?” Hannibal asked, his voice still breaking with emotion.

They were frozen for moments that felt like hours before, finally, Will gave a sharp nod and Hannibal enclosed him within his arms. One to the small of Will’s back and the other in his hair, pressing Will into him as he buried his nose in familiar curls.

This was difficult. So difficult. And he knew he shouldn’t have done it. How much this just kept hurting them both. But it was just as difficult not to do this - faced with the person he

loved the most in the world in pain, pain he had caused, how could he not hold him?

He might have held him forever if he didn't know how much harder that would make it for them both.

"Will... my flight..." He murmured into Will's hair.

He felt Will catch his breath, holding a sob. And then, before he even had chance to pull away, Will was clinging to him.

"You can't go. No... Please Hannibal... Don't go..." Forceful words punctuated with sobs that broke Hannibal's heart afresh. "I wasn't going to do this, they made me come here. I wasn't... I didn't want to. After everything, I thought I didn't want you back, I thought I could hate you but I can't."

Hannibal realised his own face was now wet with silent tears and his arms ached from how tense they were around Will's form. "Will... I've... I've hurt you so much. I can't ask you to forgive me, I can't ask you to bare my being around - I will happily go away and let you be."

"I don't want that." Will pulled back now and looked at Hannibal with a fierceness in his eyes. "You can't decide that will be the best thing for me. You can't go to France because of me - you'll be taking another choice away from me!"

"And what would you have me do Will? What would you choose?"

"I wouldn't have you do anything, only what you want. If you want to go to Paris then go, I won't stop you. But don't go because of me, that's unfair Hann." The anger flashing in Will's eyes pulled at Hannibal's gut. Will was right, he would be making another decision for them both without asking Will what he wanted. What he needed.

There was silence for a moment and then Will's hand was on his cheek and he pulled his face close, almost close enough to kiss.

"If you want to stay, please stay." There was a note of pleading in Will's voice. "If you don't want to ever see me again, then avoid me, it should be easy... But don't leave just to avoid me."

Hannibal swallowed and then cleared his suddenly dry throat. Considering his words carefully as he lost himself in Will's eyes. "And what if I don't want to avoid you? Do you want me to avoid you? Do you want to avoid me?"

Both Will's hands moved up into his hair, their bodies pressed together and faces, mouths, so close, Hannibal let out a quiet whimper of want, need.

"You weren't given a choice so you should have known better than to take mine from me. I...It's going to be hard to get over that. But I'm willing to try. Because I know this situation has hurt you just as much, if not more than it has me. I didn't come here to do this, I didn't want to do this, but I know that I need you when I'm sad and hurt. If you need me when

you're sad and hurt then tell me now and we can start over. But if not, I won't stand in your way, I'll let you go."

Over the tannoy came the final call for the check-in for the Paris flight, and Will tensed on hearing it. A sudden look of fear on his face. And that was it. How could Hannibal leave. Now that he knew that he and Will might be able to get through this. Now that he could look into the face of the boy he loved and see the abject terror there at the thought of them being separated by an ocean.

"I've been demonstrably stupid Will, please forgive me that at least." Hannibal buried his face in the crook of Will's neck. "I can't leave you, not again."

Will whimpered and pulled him somehow closer than they already were. And then their mouths found each other's - quick, needy kisses, a reassurance that each of them were there. And then slower, exploration, reacquaintance. Their hands clutching to each other.

Hannibal wasn't sure Will would ever totally get over what he had put him through, but he was going to spend as much time as Will would allow making up for it - forever if Will would have him.

The kisses melted into a crushing embrace, broken only by the final tannoy announcement that the check-in desk for Paris was now closed. Will pulled back and let out a light laugh. A laugh. It was musical and the sparkle in his eyes was breathtaking. And Hannibal wasn't sure he could keep breathing.

"Let's go find your luggage." Will murmured against Hannibal's cheek. Looking back to the counter Hannibal could see his bags were still where he had left them, guarded by an apparently delighted Adam and an amused Nigel. Hannibal let out a laugh then.

Will went to pull away but Hannibal held him in place with a sudden and difficult realisation -

"Will... I... I can't go home. I can't be there, be around my father. I can't deal with that right now." Will look confused for a moment, did he think Hannibal was still going to leave? He didn't want there to be any misunderstandings. "Can I, um, stay with you. Just for tonight, I will find a hotel tomorrow - if I can still afford one...."

Hannibal wasn't able to continue. He wasn't sure what he might have said, but it had been apparently rendered unnecessary as Will kissed him again. Soft, languid. Breathing a sigh into his mouth that Hannibal gratefully swallowed down. Time might well have stopped, Hannibal couldn't be sure. All he knew was that his hands were in Will's curls, that Will's hands were grabbing his back, pulling him tight to him. That they needed each other at that moment in any way possible. So much so that Hannibal was quite sure that the drive to Will's house would be almost unbearable. He could hardly think about it, his mind was consumed. The only reason he finally, definitely knew that time had not stopped was because he could hear the gruff Romanian voice approaching them -

"This is lovely and all, but it's time to leave before the staff turn a hose on you..."

Will laughed but continued to kiss Hannibal. And Hannibal wasn't about to stop Will doing anything he wanted to do.

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